

The Aldus Society

NEWSLETTER

Autumn, 2003

Volume 4, No. 1

Overlooked Authors Born in Columbus Topic of September Program

In conjunction with a book exhibition on early Ohio imprints being held in the Philip Sills Gallery of the William Oxley Thompson Memorial Library at The Ohio State University, Charles C. Cole, Jr., will speak on a selection of "Overlooked Authors Deserving Recognition, born in Columbus, Ohio, in the Nineteenth Century."

For his talk to Aldus, Cole will tell about fifteen authors born in Columbus, ten men and five women. He will summarize their major volumes and briefly describe the authors' careers including Lovinia Morehead, the first woman born in Columbus to become a poet; Mary Perry Jenney, a writer of children's books; Thomas Donaldson, a biographer of Walt Whitman who salvaged George Catlin's Native American paintings; William and Joseph Sullivant; and Wilbur H. Siebert, who wrote about the Underground Railroad.

Cole has researched and written about thirty-four writers of fiction and nonfiction ranging from autobiography to women's studies. Cole is the Executive Director Emeritus of the Ohio Humanities Council and as a historian he has written eight books and more than thirty articles. His book *A Fragile Capital: Identity and the Early Years of Columbus, Ohio* was published by the Ohio State University Press in 2001.

In May, 2001, Charlie spoke to The Aldus Society on "The First Books Published in Columbus, Ohio."

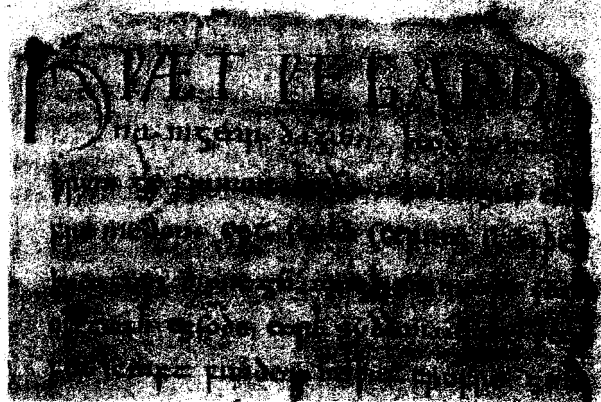
NOTE: This meeting is not being held at our regular meeting place at Thurber Center.

Overlooked Nineteenth Century Authors Born in Columbus

WHEN: Thursday, September 18th
WHERE: Room 122, Main Library, OSU Campus
TIME: 7:00 PM

5th Lecture in History of Text Series Scheduled for October 16th

On Thursday, October 16, Professor Christopher "Drew" Jones will present the fifth lecture in the Aldus Society's History of Text series. Professor Jones will speak on the Anglo-Saxon manuscript tradition.



The only surviving manuscript of Beowulf, which is now in the British Library.

These texts were created between 700 and 1100 A.D. Although there are three or four famous Old English poetry texts by

known authors, most were written by anonymous or unknown poets. The subjects of these writings included heroism and the intertwining of heroism and religion, and secular texts.

The script in which these texts were written was derived from the Roman alphabet with some Runic influence, and is rather distinctive, looking something like modern calligraphy.

Jones is assistant professor in the English Department at OSU and teaches Old English and Medieval Latin.

The Anglo-Saxon Manuscript Tradition

WHEN: Thursday, October 16th
WHERE: Thurber Center, 91 Jefferson Ave.
TIME: 7:00 PM

The Aldus Society

Trustees, 2003-04

PRESIDENT
Ron Ravneberg

MEMBERSHIP
Paul Watkins

SECRETARY
Laura Masonbrink

TREASURER
Emerson Gilbert

PROGRAMS
Marcia Preston

COMMUNICATIONS
Genie Hoster

ARCHIVES
Anita Branin

Ivan Gilbert

Jay Hoster

Helen Liebman

Joyce Miller

William Rich

Geoffrey D. Smith

The Newsletter is published quarterly by the Communications Committee of The Aldus Society. If you have submissions or ideas for articles, please contact Genie or Jay Hoster, Newsletter Co-editors, 267-7774 (days) or at bookshigh@aol.com

NEWSLETTER
CONTRIBUTORS:
Laura Masonbrink
Jay B. Hoster
Geoffrey D. Smith
Ron Ravneberg
William Rich

NEWSLETTER
PRODUCTION:
Lois Smith

The Aldus Society
Mailing Address:
P. O. Box 1150
Worthington, Ohio
43085-1150

Ron Ravneberg can be contacted at 457-1153 or rravneberg@aol.com

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

From Ronald L. Ravneberg

Where has the summer gone?

Has it really been nearly four months since our last gathering at Thurber Center? Although there have been no regular Aldus Society meetings since May, there has been no lack of activities for members to attend. In June a number participated in a paper-making workshop; July saw many members traveling to Ohio Wesleyan University to drop in at a calligraphy workshop. And by the time you read this, many of us should have completed a visit to the Special Collections of the Oberlin College Library.

I am frequently approached by people who express surprise that The Aldus Society has been as successful as it has been during its short time in existence. So what's our secret? For me, it's the diversity of the membership and the programming that have made the difference.

We're into book collecting, but we're not *about* book collecting. We treasure language, but we're not linguists. Some of us revere the book as an artifact, while others value only the words inside. Making paper by hand is as interesting as collecting first editions.

So what's the common theme?

The Aldus Society is all about ideas, principally as expressed in the book, past, present and future. Not just my ideas or your ideas, but everybody's ideas.

At the ripe old age of four and a half, we're still a new kid on the block. There are great and long-established organizations of book collectors across the country, foremost among which are the Grolier Club in New York City, the Caxton Club in Chicago and the Rowfant Club in Cleveland. They are wonderful places to visit and their members are fascinating to meet.

If The Aldus Society has a shortcoming, it's that not enough people know we're here.

The other day I was talking to George Bauman at the Acorn Bookshop and he introduced me to a frequent customer of his who had an obvious passion for books — a passion that extended far beyond her purse (can we relate?). Having already purchased two or three small volumes from George, when she found yet another she asked him if he'd hold it for her until her next visit (with a recharged pocketbook, no doubt).

I chatted with her a bit and learned that she collected the works of Edgar Allan Poe. But she was frustrated because she had nobody with whom to share her interest in books. She had not heard of The Aldus Society. George made sure she had a brochure and a newsletter before she left the shop, and I hope we'll see her as a new member in the future.

But the question arises ... how many more people like her are there?

As we move into our fourth full year of book-related programming, we will continue to build upon the rich and diverse foundation laid down over the previous three years. The Aldus Society is, in effect, a library. We are a central site where people with many interests can come and find something that speaks to them.

~~There's a quotation on the front of the Library at the University of Idaho that when applied to the Aldus Society sums up why I feel that we will continue to prosper ...~~

"Here is the knowledge of ages past that all may come and share today."



More Dates to Pencil-In On Your Calendar

In addition to the events mentioned elsewhere in this newsletter, there are several more dates you should reserve for even more biblio-programs! They are:

November 9: We will host Cleveland's Rowfant Club, and our program will be given by book artist Barry Moser. We will be sending out program details and registration information shortly.

December 6: Columbus artist Malcolm Cochran is completing a series of drawings in response to a new long poem, *Fire*, by Maine poet Wesley McNair. The poem and drawings will be printed in a limited edition, letterpress book produced by Darin Forchard Press in early 2004. Aldus members are invited to meet the three collaborators at Cochran's studio for a short reading and to view the original drawings.

Full details on both events and the date for our Annual Holiday Dinner will be arriving by soon...or check our website at www.aldussociety.com.

Opportunity Knocks

Treat yourself to a unique learning experience while helping the OSU Libraries. Friends of the OSU Libraries is seeking a few trustworthy volunteers to assist in working with Special Collections. At the moment they are seeking individuals or partners to work a half day per week (with flexibility for travel) in the following areas:

Cartoon Research Library with Lucy Caswell, with responsibilities for making decisions about filing and database coding of editorial cartoon acquisitions. Location: Wexner Center

Avant Writing Collection with John M. Bennett, with responsibilities for inventorying, labeling files and writing guidelines for new acquisitions. Location: Thompson Library

For details contact FOL board member Jennie McCormick at jenniemccormick@sbcglobal.net, at 885-8132, or call the Friends office: (614) 292-3387.

A Few (More) Good Volunteers Needed

Thurber House, the downtown literary center and museum of James Thurber materials, is currently looking for a few (more) good volunteers to help with operating their bookstore/museum shop on weekends and occasionally selling books at literary events (readings, receptions, conferences) around town.

If you'd like a little more information about what's involved, please contact Director of Art and Publications Laura Bidwa at lbidwa@thurberhouse.org.

Collector Donald Tritt to Present November Program on Switzerland

On November 20th, Aldus Society member Donald Tritt will give a presentation on his wonderful collection of books and papers dealing with his family homeland of Switzerland.

Tritt has recently helped to found the North American Swiss Center in New Glarus, Wisconsin, where he is donating these books and papers which he has accumulated during a lifetime of research and travel. In 1998, he published the book *Swiss Festivals in North America*, which includes not only a list of these festivals, but also information about the festivals held in Switzerland. He is also president of Tritt Family Research, a non-profit organization dedicated to research and publication of accounts of the Tritt family history, which has roots back to 16th century Switzerland.

Whether you fell in love with Switzerland when you saw *The Sound of Music*, or if you are interested in hearing a lifetime collector share his special finds and memories, you'll enjoy this program.

WHEN: November 20th
WHERE: Thurber Center, 91 Jefferson Ave.
TIME: 7:00 PM

Calligraphy Lecture Enjoyed by Members

On Sunday, July 20, 2003, about twenty members of The Aldus Society attended a lecture by Roger Wieck, Curator of Medieval Manuscripts at the Pierpont Morgan Library.

Mr. Wieck was the guest speaker for the 23rd International Lettering Conference held at Ohio Wesleyan University and sponsored by the Calligraphy Guild of Columbus.

Mr. Wieck's informative talk, "Medieval Best Seller: The Book of Hours," surveyed these often luxurious manuscript books from the thirteenth through the sixteenth centuries and was accompanied by colorful slides drawing upon the collections of the Morgan Library. Copies of Mr. Wieck's splendid book, *Painted Prayers: The Book of Hours in Medieval and Renaissance Art*, were on sale and Mr. Wieck graciously signed copies upon completion of his talk. Having attended a dinner prior to the event, a good time was had by all the Aldus members who were able to attend this inspiring event.

— Geoffrey Smith



10 Rules for Book Collecting

The following guidelines for book collecting are taken from a May 2003 presentation to the Aldus Society made by Stuart Rose of Dayton, Ohio. They represent sound advice for a collector to ponder, whether you are simply a browser of used book stores or a high-spot collector of the great books of the world.

1. **TOPICS:** Find a field you like that is within your budget and have fun with collecting. Try to pick a field that nobody else collects.
2. **ADVICE:** Draw upon the services of a top-notch, independent advisor to help you develop your collection. Be willing to pay a fixed fee — not a commission — to this person for books recommended or located for your collection.
3. **QUALITY:** Buy the best books in your field that you can afford. Don't buy existing collections, because it will take too much effort to dispose of the items you neither want nor need.
4. **BUDGETS:** Set a budget and stick to it. There will always be other copies of the books you are seeking, and they may well be priced lower than that too-expensive one you just found.
5. **PRICES:** Do your own buying and trust your gut instincts. Negotiate prices with dealers. Search for books at book fairs. Internet pricing on fixed price sites is generally cheaper than bidding in either live or Internet auctions.
6. **UPGRADES:** Don't sell or trade a title until you have a better copy in your hands.
7. **INVESTMENTS:** Don't start collecting books just for profit. In the long term, prices for good books do go up, but in most cases books are not viable short-term investments.
8. **ASSOCIATES:** Develop friends in the collecting world who will help you expand intellectually.
9. **DONATIONS:** Don't donate your books; often the organization will put them up for sale rather than make them available to the public. When you sell, consider selling to other collectors and giving them the thrill of finding that perfect book for their collections.
10. **EXPLANATIONS:** Don't even *try* to rationalize your book collecting to anyone ... it won't work.

The Nature of Making Paper

Handmade paper: natural, imperfect, unique, and beautiful. Perhaps these qualities helped inspire ten Aldus members to gather on Thursday evening, June 26th in an upstairs art studio of Wehrle Hall at Ohio Dominican University for the hands-on experience of creating paper.

The room was set up with a large table in the center. On the table were various samples of handmade paper, a large bucket of damp pulp the color of applesauce, and two deep rectangular plastic bins of water. Also on the table were a stack of red felt squares and a stack of large, thick, absorbent, mats. Next to the sink there was a collection of fresh cuttings from various plants: lavender, sweet peas, and miniature pink roses, to name a few.

Dr. Janette Knowles, Chair of the Fine Arts and Communication Division at Ohio Dominican, conducted the workshop with familiarity and enthusiasm. She began by giving a short lecture on the history of paper and distributing a short photocopied introduction to papermaking taken from *The Craft of Handmade Paper*, by John Plowman (Knickerbocker, 1997).

Janette explained that she chose abaca pulp for the workshop due to its strength and texture. It was mixed with ground mica, which gave the pulp a slightly iridescent appearance. Then Janette proceeded with a demonstration. In one bin of water, the pulp was more plentiful than in the other bin. Janette started with the thicker of the two concentrations, stirring up the pulp and water with her hand and sliding her mold and deckle into the bin. When she raised them up out of the bin, the pulp settled on the screen of the mold and the water drained out.

Satisfied with the consistency, Janette removed the deckle frame and turned the mold upside down onto a dampened mat, rubbing the backside of the screen to cause the pulp to release. She used a dampened piece of felt to press more of the water out of the pulp before demonstrating how to lay some leaves into the paper. This was followed by a layer of the thinner concentration of pulp, just thick enough to hold the leaves in place, but thin enough to allow the leaves to visually show through.

Then Janette surprised us all by gently picking up the new sheet of paper and sticking it to the surface of a vertical glass window, though any clean, flat, smooth, surface would have sufficed. There the paper would stay. Then it was time for the participants to give papermaking a try. Some seemed a little timid at first with plunging their hands

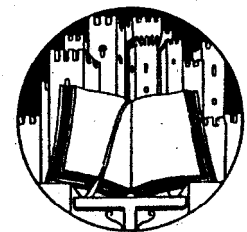
into the pulp and water, but soon creativity and energy overcame the reservations. Some participants brought their own items to include in their paper, such as old photographs and yarn; others took advantage of the lovely foliage Janette provided from her garden. Everyone found a spot on the table to work, and ultimately were able to create some sheets of paper that were uniquely theirs.

Many participants articulated an interest in future papermaking opportunities. Janette expressed eagerness to lead another workshop for The Aldus Society, but also informed participants that Phoenix Rising Printmaking Cooperative and Gallery in German Village (444-2743) is scheduled to host some papermaking classes this fall. Craft stores such as JoAnn ETC and Michael's usually carry papermaking starter kits, as well.

— Laura Masonbrink



36. Der Papierer.
Aus Jost Ammans Ständebuch. 1568.



BOOKSCOUTING, cont. from page 6
the OSU library, this time to the
English Dictionary of National

Biography, and, subsequently, to William Amos' *The Originals*, revealed that this very successful practitioner and Cambridge Professor of Medicine was the inventor of the clinical thermometer. More important for me, he was a friend and physician to George Eliot. The character of Tertius Lydgate, the idealistic young physician in *Middlemarch*, who succumbed to the demands of a social climbing wife to become a society doctor, is a fictional representation of Dr. Allbutt. So my book is in the way of being a George Eliot association item, albeit a little distantly. Nevertheless, I had bought Lydgate's *Browning*, a book once belonging to the prototype of a leading figure in one of the greatest of Victorian novels, a book I esteem (and do have in first edition form.).

A final note: *Browning* may have had the same effect on Allbutt that he had on Carlyle. My book is largely unopened.

Book Scouting in Columbus Shops

by William Rich

Literature in first and early editions is a dominant collecting interest for me. A collection in this area made up of only "finds" scouted from book stores would be a strange hodgepodge, therefore I mostly resort to avenues other than scouting. But I do, from time to time, make discoveries of books in used book stores that are important for me.

There are a number of used and rare bookshops in Columbus. Not a huge number, but enough to indulge regularly in this particularly pleasant aspect of book collecting. Here are the stories of two "finds," each from a different shop within our city limits:

**John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Philadelphia:
William Young and Joseph James, no date**

This was found in 1993. It contains the twelve books of the famous epic in two separately paginated volumes, each with its own title page. The exterior is unprepossessing, a binding of old sheepskin, age-darkened, chipped at the spine ends, cracking at the joints, and with some of the surface abrasion strips to which this binding is prone. Inside, it's not too good either. The front free endpaper is missing, and the pages have various stains and a few tears. The dealer's notation inside the front cover was "early 19th Cent., \$25." The obvious age of the binding made me pick up the book in the first place. But a feature of the type font was interesting – throughout, every "s" occurring within a word was a long "s," which to modern eyes resembles a lower case "f." An interesting occurrence in both England and America, quite close to 1800, was the change to the now standard form of "s." This older feature, and the binding, both suggested the 18th rather than 19th century for the book. On the basis that any 18th century American imprint is now uncommon, and for the very reasonable \$25, I bought the book.



A half hour later, at the OSU library, I consulted Evans, *American Bibliography*, a chronological listing of all American imprints from 1639 to 1800. Sure enough, my book was published in Philadelphia in 1787, and is the first separate publication of *Paradise Lost* in America, preceded only by its appearance in Milton's *Works*, published the year before by the same Philadelphia printers. A look at the *National Union* catalog confirmed that there seem to be no later printings of this edition, and it is rather uncommon. Since the chances are completely negligible for me ever having the \$90,000 or so big ones that the true first edition, first issue (London, 1677) in contemporary binding brings at auction, this first American will do nicely. All in all, one of life's better moments.

And, a final note on this one: at two places in the book, including on the first title, a "James M'Gready" has written his name. There was a James McGready, 1758-1817, a noted Presbyterian preacher in Logan County, Kentucky, who started the great revival movement that swept from his churches throughout the West and

South around 1800. I have no proof that this is his signature, or that this ever was his book. Unprovenanced signatures in books should mostly be ignored. But it is pleasurable to think of this dour Calvinist, preaching, I suppose, hellfire and brimstone and the awful wrath of God, owning *Paradise Lost*. No one made Old Nick look quite as attractive as did Milton, and somehow I think it appropriate that a man fighting the devil should have had this particular book. I don't think I will ever try to find samples of the real McGready's writing to compare with my book's signature. It's too much fun to retain this particular illusion.

**Robert Browning, *The Agamemnon of Aeschylus*,
London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1877**

I found my copy of this title in 1998. There is no doubt that this is a Browning first edition, one of the later ones, in the typical beveled green cloth-covered boards of these books. Such later Brownings are common, Browning being widely popular. His later books went into large printings, even if they weren't always read. Some of Browning can be pretty obscure, even to his contemporaries, and the search for meaning can be pretty off-putting.

A famous story is told of the Carlyles, Thomas and his wife Jane, who had the habit of reading by the fireside in the evening, each with their own book. Thomas jumps up, pale and shaking, and hands his book to Jane. "Please read this page, and tell me what you think," he demands. Jane picks up the book (by Browning), reads as instructed, then looks up and says, "I can't understand a word of this." "Thank God," says Thomas, "I thought I had suddenly lost my mind."

Notwithstanding Browning's power to cloud men's minds, I like and collect Browning in first editions, although I have made no systematic attempt at completeness as far as his later books are concerned. *The Agamemnon* is an English language verse rendering of the famous early Greek tragedy. I did not have this title, so bought it, since it was in Near Fine condition and appropriately priced at \$20.

In addition, the book had an interesting book plate, that of one Thomas Clifford Allbutt, who proclaims himself to be MA, MD, Cantab., and FRS, residence at Carr Manor, Meanwood. It's a rather large pictorial plate, complete with floral and faunal embellishments and mottos (these last in Greek). Evidently a man of accomplishment, this Cambridge Master of Arts, Medical Doctor, and Fellow of the Royal Society, no less. Judging from his lavish book plate, he clearly thought well of himself, but perhaps, with good reason.

I was intrigued as to how a book from the collection of this long-extinct English medico ended up in Columbus. Recourse again to

Cont. on page 5