

OPUNTIA 366

Early February 2017

Opuntia is published by Dale Speirs, Calgary, Alberta. It is posted on www.efanzines.com and www.fanac.org. My e-mail address is: opuntia57@hotmail.com When sending me an emailed letter of comment, please include your name and town in the message.

BIRD LIFE IN DOWNTOWN COWTOWN

photos by Dale Speirs

TD Square is an atrium mall in the downtown core of Calgary, connected to numerous skyscrapers by enclosed second-floor pedestrian walkways known as the Plus 15 network. This allows office workers to travel around the core in shirtsleeves regardless of weather. It also allows birds to sneak in through open loading bays on the ground floor. They eventually work their way up into the atrium and can enjoy a good life in the 4th-floor food court, scrounging for food crumbs on the floor. Below: a magpie ponders where its next meal may be.



At left, a couple of house sparrows forage in the food court. Below, one of them feeds on a piece of french fry I tossed it.

The indoor bird population fluctuates. It builds up, then suddenly drops when the management live-traps them for later release outside far away.



TD Square faces onto the Stephen Avenue pedestrian mall, which is 8 Avenue SW through the core. These mallards are a rare sight, the only time I have ever seen aquatic birds on the mall. There are no open water displays or vegetation to attract them; the mall is hard landscaping except for potted trees.

This pair was ambling along looking for crumbs but not having any luck. I suspect they went back to the Bow River a few blocks away and told their friends not to bother.

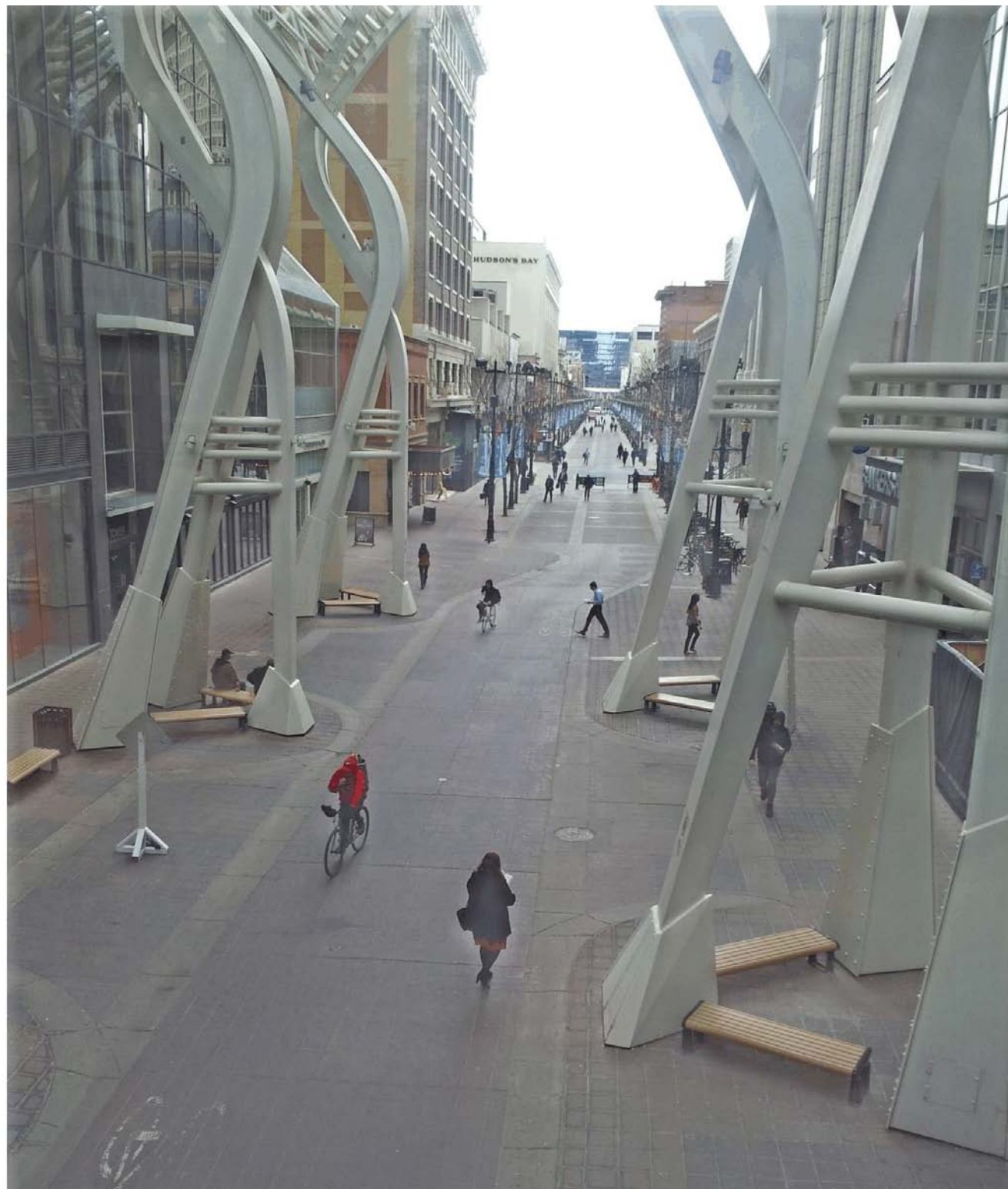


HUMAN LIFE IN DOWNTOWN COWTOWN

photos by Dale Speirs

I've accumulated a number of photos taken on Stephen Avenue during 2016 that I'll use up here. This view is looking east from the west end of the mall, taken from a Plus 15 walkway over the mall. The photo was taken on a Sunday morning, which is why there are so few people seen. Normally it is much busier.

The silver building terminating the mall at the far end is New City Hall. The tall structures in the foreground support wind baffles (out of the photo) designed to calm the air on the mall. Before construction, winds hitting the skyscrapers on either side were deflected downward and were strong enough to knock pedestrians off their feet.



At the opposite end of the mall, looking west from 1 Street SE. Obviously taken in the summer.



Police patrols on the mall are on foot or by horse, since cruisers are not practical. Taken on a rainy day. The summer of 2016 was one of the wettest in Calgary's history since records were first kept in 1882. No single heavy rains or flooding, just frequent showers every day.



Assorted scenes from various times throughout 2016.



From the 1950s to late 1970s, the vast majority of pioneer sandstone buildings in the downtown were destroyed by skyscraper construction. There wasn't even a pretense at salvaging the facades and using them on the pedestals of the towers. The public outcry became too great, and in the 1980s a series of preservation orders were enacted by City Council. Stephen Avenue became one of the few places in Calgary where the original history is preserved.

The Imperial Bank of Canada building shown below on the mall is a sentimental favourite of mine. It merged with the Commerce Bank of Canada in 1961 to form the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, still in business today as CIBC. My Uncle Norman, about whom I wrote in OPUNTIA #67.5, began his 42-year career with CIBC as a teller in the Imperial Bank at their Eckville branch in rural western Alberta, and finished it as a senior loans officer in Calgary for CIBC.



He never worked in this building though, and it is now part of the Hyatt Regency Hotel.

At right, the hotel tower is seen behind the sandstone building, which is fully integrated with the skyscraper.



Just down the mall on the next block is this batch of preserved buildings.



by Dale Speirs

Hardcover Glories.

[illegible]

The committee finalized plans for THE COLOPHON in late 1929 and began publishing in 1930, just in time for the Great Depression. Subscription was \$10 for four issues, a fair sum even before the Panic of 1929, and later went to \$15, positively outrageous for that era. The intention was to limit subscribers to 3,000 but at one point dipped to 1,700. The publishers were lucky to get as

The hard times crushed THE COLOPHON down but never entirely killed it. It was revived in July 1935 as an ordinary hardcover magazine for book collectors and literary folk, produced by Pynson Printers of New York City. The new series stumbled along until December 1938 (dated Autumn). It still wouldn't die, so yet another series began in March 1939 until February 1940, when the war finished it off. The fourth and final series, titled THE NEW COLOPHON, ran from 1948 to 1950 but by a different printer located in Maine.

The **COLOPHON**
A BOOK COLLECTORS' QUARTERLY

The work was entirely professional in quality, and intended to show off fine printing as much as to provide a showcase for authors. The first issue is in my collection, shown at left.

The lead article, that is, the first signature of pages bound into the hardcover, is a history of colophons by Ruth Granniss. In the era of illuminated manuscripts and then early printing, a colophon was a brief text at the end of the book telling

who the printer was, where and when it was printed, and usually accompanied by the printer's logo or mark. It was an advertisement for the printer, who took great pride in his work.

The first title page appeared in 1463. Prior to that, the front of the book simply began the text immediately. It took another couple of decades before title pages became common. Then, over several centuries, the colophon migrated to the front of the book and became part of the title page.

Title pages originally began as display ads to be posted in shop windows or plastered as posters on walls. For economy, they were printed with the text as a separate page, and were also used as wrappers for the book. That is why old-fashioned books have such long subtitles expostulating on the book's contents in detail, because they were actually intended to be display ads.

Books were commonly sold as unbound pages to the buyer, who then took them to a bookbinder. In the early days of printing, the binder was almost always a cobbler or a leather worker who knew how to wrap thin boards with leather, emboss designs or titles to the buyer's specifications, and then sew them together. As time went by, printers began employing binders in their own shops and selling books already bound.

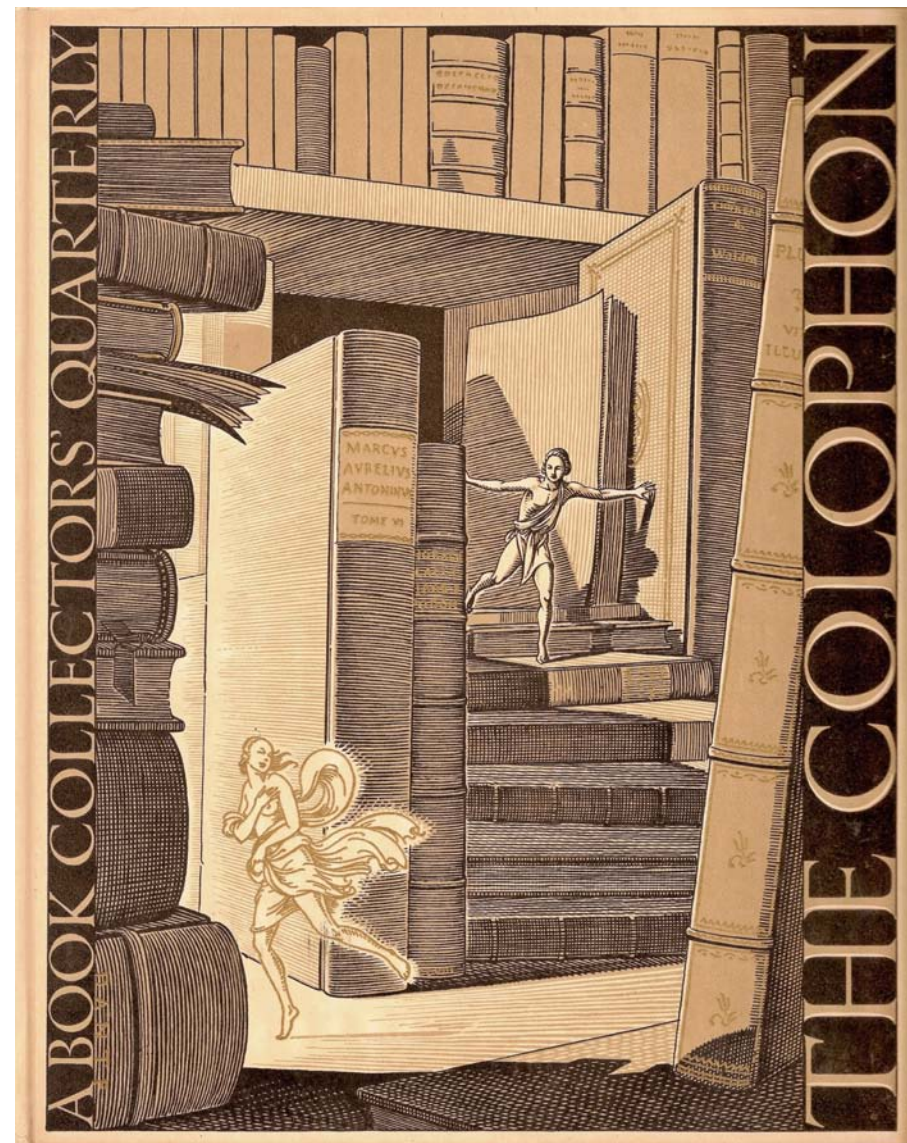
Articles in THE COLOPHON tend to follow the same few themes. Famous authors reminisce about how their first book made it into print. Not a few of them wish they could call back those first literary efforts and burn them. Other articles discuss the technical details of printing and why so many collectors and dealers get them wrong. Some of the signatures are detailed analyses of text, of interest to perhaps a dozen people then and a dozen people today.

As an example, a first edition has its pages all printed on the same day on the same press on the same paper. However, binding is a separate process, one that many printers subcontract. The first printing was often released in several different bindings at once. There would be a limited edition of sumptuous leather with luxurious tooling. Then other copies of the first printing were bound in utilitarian covers for the library trade. Those intended for bookstores would get a third binding. Completist collectors tie themselves into knots over which was the first edition, even though the pages are identical.

In THE COLOPHON #2, published 1930 May, John C. Eckel, in "First Flights", reviews the problems of finding copies of the first books issued by now-eminent

authors. When they were starting out as nobodies, their first book probably had a print run of only a few hundred copies. The literary quality, or lack of it, may have led to poor sales, or most copies went to libraries where they were read to death. (Which is why children's books from yore are almost impossible to find in near-mint condition.) Eckel writes: "*Strange to say, some of the ex-library copies are found in fair shape due to the reluctance of patrons to read them.*"

Skipping issues, we come to THE COLOPHON #6, published in 1931 June as the Great Depression began to bite deep. The cover is shown below and, I think, is the best one in the history of this publication.



The one article in #6 that interested me was “The Way Of The Best Seller” by Lillian Gary Taylor. She decided to collect bestselling novels and sort them on her bookshelves in chronological order. This would give an idea of how public tastes have changed.

Her main difficulty was in obtaining copies from two or three decades ago. Current or near-recent novels were readily available in secondhand bookstores, and 75- or 100-year-old books were carried by antiquarians. No one wanted to deal in between, in what was perceived as cheap common stuff. It was out of taste for modern audiences but not old enough for snobs.

As a philatelist, I’ve noticed the same problems. The most difficult stamps to obtain from dealers are those issued in the early 2000s, while Zeppelin stamps litter their office floors. I have been searching high and low for a Canadian postal card issued in 2005 with no luck anywhere online.

Taylor notes that the reason few bestsellers survive the test of time is because they become unreadable as the language evolves and the pace of life quickens. She wrote this in 1931, remember, so imagine 85 years later when far too many people never read anything more than 140 characters long.

Another thing more noticeable after 85 years is paper quality. Old books and magazines turn various shades of tan or brown as they age. An anomaly occurs in THE COLOPHON #9, published in 1932. The first signature, an article about the poet Walt Whitman, was produced by Pynson Printing on an unknown paper stock that all these decades later is as bright and white as if it had come off the press yesterday. I’ve never seen anything like it with other old books.

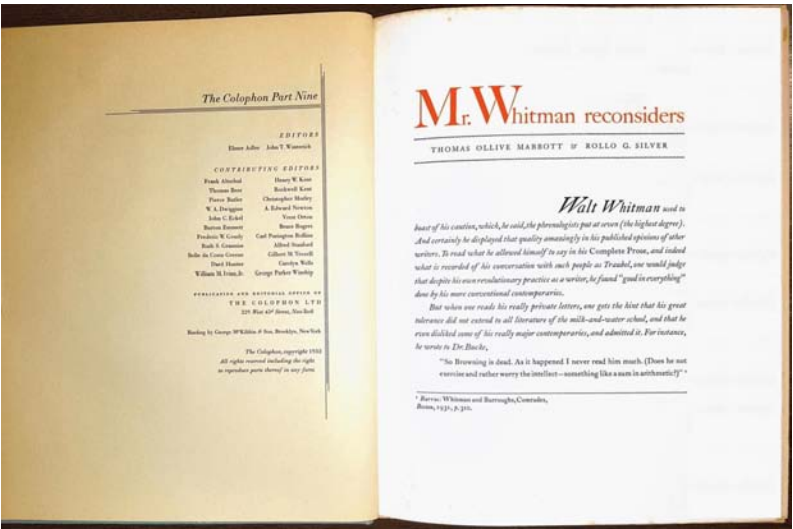
The technical articles about printing and book collecting can be interesting if one skips over the detailed collations and just reads the meat of the text. In THE COLOPHON #13 (1933 February) for example, J. DeLancey Ferguson clarifies the forgeries made by Alexander Howland Smith, who in 1893 was sentenced in Scotland to a year’s imprisonment for faking masses of Robert Burns’s poems and letters.

One wonders about some of Smith’s victims. A museum bought a single job lot of 155 manuscripts purportedly by Burns without asking themselves how such a flood of documents could reach the market from out of nowhere. Smith forged Burns’s signature to memoranda and aides memoire that people don’t sign. You don’t put your signature and date on a grocery shopping list, or a leaf torn from your daytimer calendar. Yet everything Smith sold had a Burns signature on it, even if it was a reminder to himself on a piece of scrap paper to do an errand later.

THE COLOPHON #17, issued 1934 June, has a good batch of articles. Leading off is “The Dead Man’s Chest” by Vincent Starrett, who investigated Robert Louis Stevenson’s famous sea chanty from his novel TREASURE ISLAND. RLS got the name Dead Man’s Chest after reading an account of an islet off the coast of Puerto Rico. The islet was originally named by the Spanish as “El Caja de Muertos” because from the sea it looked like a coffin sitting on a platform.

The name was garbled into English as Dead Man’s Chest. Countless generations of schoolchildren have since sung the lyrics under the impression that the fifteen men were standing on top of a giant treasure chest, or, worse yet, perhaps the corpse of a fellow pirate. The chanty was original with Stevenson, who only wrote the one verse. Many song writers since have added lyrics to fill out the story.

For Sherlockians, Dorothy L. Sayers wrote “The Dates In The Red-Headed League”, nitpicking the contradictions in that story. Watson says the case began on October 9, 1890. The client shows Holmes a newspaper ad that appeared on April 27, “just two months ago”. In later conversation the ad is said to have been published “this day eight weeks”, which would put it in August. Sayers attributes the mistakes to Watson writing up the case years later and misreading his notes because of bad handwriting.



Hardcover Glories: Reversion To The Mean.

Hard times do not allow much in the way of discretionary spending by customers, and THE COLOPHON had been born at the worst possible time. The original format of THE COLOPHON failed, and the hardcover apa was no more. It was quickly revived as a hardcover quarterly but printed as a magazine with regular page numbers and by only one printer, Pynson Printers.

The size was smaller and the cover art was recycled from the first series. That it was now downmarket was shown by printing the price on the cover. The previous series operated on the premise that if you had to ask the price, you couldn't afford it. The fine printing and show-off typography vanished.

The new editorial emphasis was aimed at book collectors, not avant garde printers. There are more discussions about less-rare books and what edition appeared when. Many anecdotes and vignettes about authors, publishers, or printers appeared.

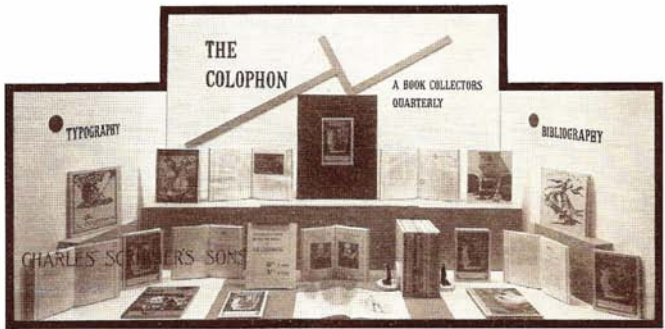
Volume 1, Number 1 of the new series (TCNS) was dated 1935 Summer. The subscription was cut to \$6 per year and, for the first time, display advertisements appeared, as Pynson struggled to survive the Great Depression. A subscription blank tipped into my copy is shown at right.

In that first issue is a discussion about who printed the first Bible in America. The conclusion was that it was what is now known as the Indian Bible, translated into an aboriginal language for use by missionaries. Burton Stevenson tried to verify that Emerson was the originator of the famous "build a better mousetrap" quote. As with so many other famous quotes, the version remembered today differs from the original.

Codman Hislop investigates the history of the Old Mother Goose rhymes. The poems came from a Boston printer who didn't get along with his mother-in-law Elizabeth Vergoose. They were first printed in 1719, after she was safely dead.

William Alexander Jackson wrote about "Proof-Reading In The Sixteenth And Seventeenth Centuries". It was the custom then for authors to visit the print shop as the pages of their book came off the press, and correct them on the spot.

Matters were complicated by the fact that the English language was in the final stages of birth and there were no standards of spelling. Every author and printer



A Fifth Avenue Window: To see is to buy

THE display of COLOPHONS, old and new, in the rare book window of Charles Scribner's Sons caused considerable comment and incidentally a surprising number of sales. In the words of the old French proverb, with THE COLOPHON "To see is to buy."

The Editors have been encouraged to believe that at least five thousand booklovers will want to own copies of THE COLOPHON. And now it is their hope to get these copies into the hands of most of these new subscribers before Christmas. Experience repeatedly shows nothing is so successful in securing new subscribers as a copy of the quarterly placed in the hands of a good prospect, and undoubtedly you know someone who should be given the opportunity to examine a copy of THE COLOPHON NEW SERIES.

Therefore:

We are now offering to send a copy of the first number for examination to any booklover suggested by a regular subscriber.

Won't you suggest a name?

As a prospective COLOPHON ENTHUSIAST
[TO THE COLOPHON . 229 W 43 . NEW YORK]

NAME

STREET

CITY

Suggested by:
Address

[If preferred — the six dollars for annual subscription may be attached to this blank]

had his own phonetic spelling, based on how he heard words.

Proofreading in those days didn't mean checking the spelling, but making certain the correct words had been used.

TCNS V2#1 was dated 1936 Autumn and continues the trend to stories about famous book collectors and analyses of book editions, but does have a few other items of interest.

Louis Blake Duff writes on a subject that is of major importance to Canadian historians but is mostly unknown elsewhere, the Jesuit RELATIONS.

These were annual reports in book form published from 1632 until 1673 by the Jesuit missionaries in New France. They are the most detailed accounts of life and geography in the New France and Great Lakes areas, and are a basic reference to historians of eastern Canada.

Duff notes the long and arduous procedure by which the volumes were published. The priests out in the boreal forest would compile a manuscript reporting on what they had done, what the natives and the land were like, and include maps. Each summer, the manuscripts were then carried by foot messenger over hundreds of kilometres to the Superior at Quebec City. He organized and edited the reports into a coherent narrative. That autumn the annual ship from France would arrive and take the latest compilation back home. The printer would set it in type and have it out the following spring.

Considering the hazards of transport, through swamps and past hostile natives, then across the Atlantic during the stormy season, it is remarkable that only one manuscript of the RELATIONS was lost. Ironically it happened in France when the Jesuit messenger carrying it from the port to Paris was robbed by highwaymen.

In another article, Wilfred Partington asks “Do We Ken John Peel?” about the famous hunting song. There really was a John Peel, who loved hunting. He was a popular man, beloved by his people and friends. John Woodcock Graves wrote the song in 1832, putting it in the rural dialect spoken by Peel and the local citizens. Graves told Peel at the time: “*By jove, Peel, you’ll be sung when we’re both run to earth.*”

The catchy song was an instant hit and quickly spread. The dialect was too difficult for the townies, so as the song spread its words were converted to standard English. There were also some changes in the sense. Partington includes a side-by-side comparison of the two versions. One obvious change was in the first line, when “coat so grey” became “coat so gay”.

At the back of this issue of TCNS are the results of a readership poll guessing which modern authors circa 1936 will still be considered greats in the year 2000. It is a truism that almost all bestselling authors are forgotten a generation later, so this poll is of interest.

The readers of 1936 felt that the following would have permanence in that far distant future. They weren’t too far wrong and there is nothing to sneer at in the list, granting that most are only read today in university Eng Lit classes.

First position was given to Sinclair Lewis. In descending order came Willa Cather, Eugene O’Neill, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Robert Frost, Theodore Dreiser, James Truslow Adams (who? a misfire), George Santayana, Stephen

Vincent Benet, and James Branch Cabell. Most of these are now considered minor writers, but some names you’ll recognize.

TCNS V2#2 is dated 1937 Winter. An interesting article in this issue is “Worlds Built On Books” by the actor Jean Hersholt, about how the research departments of Hollywood studios operated. For historical dramas, the studios did make a good-faith effort to be as realistic as possible, subject to budget and artistic constraints. Conflation of events and places that were scattered in real history is often used to cram everything in to a movie that can only run two hours at the most. That is considered legitimate artistic licence.

Hersholt’s studio knew he collected first editions and borrowed his copy of DAVID COPPERFIELD so they could photograph the title page to use the font for the movie credits.

The studios tried to replicate clothing and objects of an old era as closely as possible, bearing in mind the cost of manufacturing them. Sometimes shortcuts or substitutes had to be used because it was unreasonably expensive to copy the real thing. Often there were no pictures of an object, and they had to guess what a medieval item looked like.

TCNS V2#3, dated 1937 Summer, is an issue I would have skipped over for reviewing but for one article that catches the attention of Canadians, “Wolfe’s Copy Of Gray’s Elegy” by Edwin Wolf. Canada is what it is today because of the Battle of the Plains of Abraham on September 13, 1759, when British forces commanded by General Wolfe scaled the cliffs at Québec City and caught the French by surprise. Wolfe died during the battle, as did the French commander Montcalm.

The legend arose that the night before the battle, as the British troops prepared to climb up, Wolfe recited from memory to his men the famous poem “Elegy Written In A Country Churchyard” by Thomas Gray. He reached the verse:

*“The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,
And all that beauty, all that wealth e’er gave,
Awaits alike the inevitable hour.
The paths of glory lead but to the grave.”*

Wolfe then said to his soldiers: “*Now, gentlemen, I would rather be the author of that piece than take Québec.*” For more than a century, the anecdote was

considered a good story that never happened. That changed in 1913 when a copy of Gray's poetry turned up, which was authenticated beyond any reasonable doubt as being Wolfe's copy.

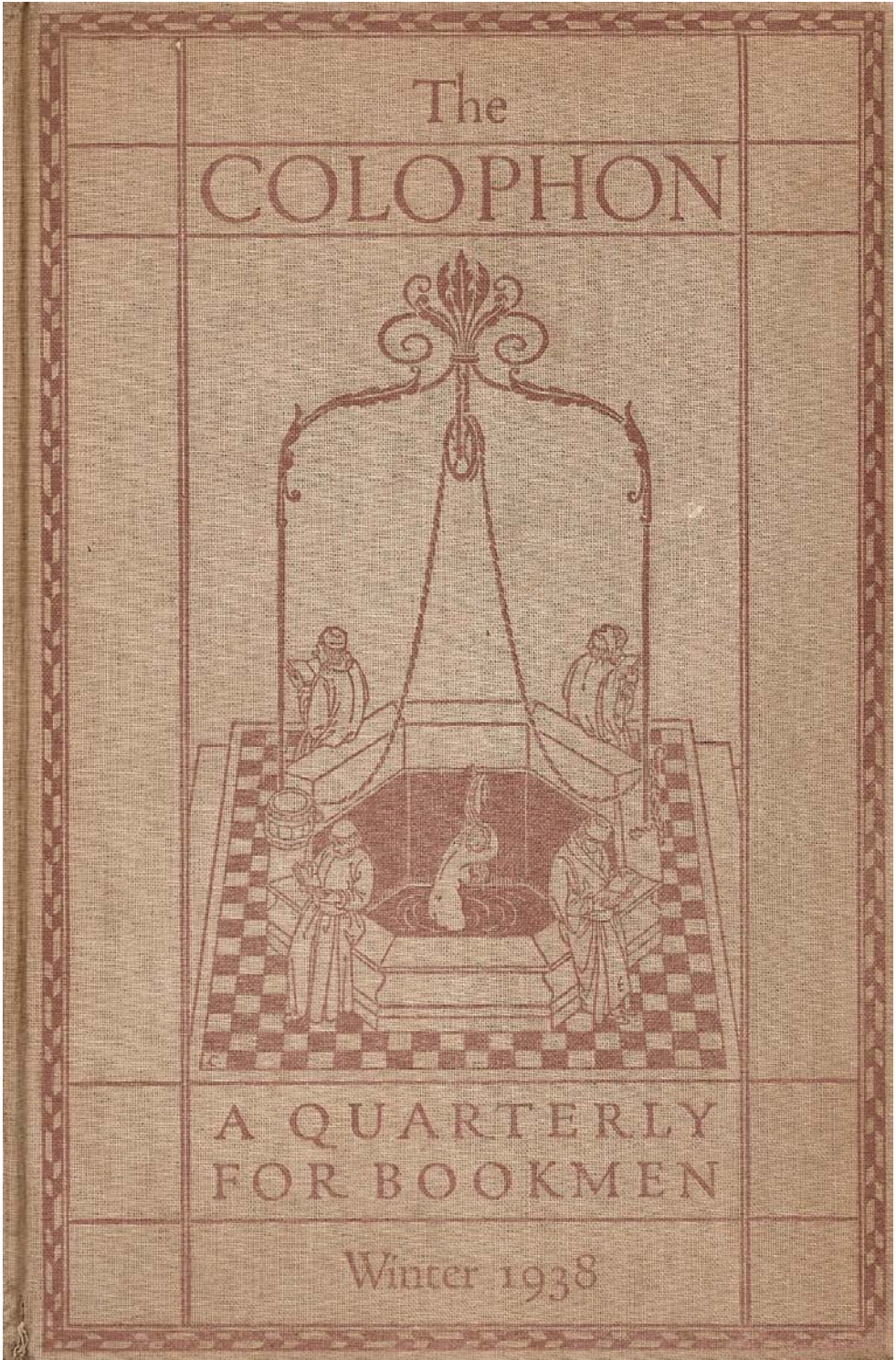
The book was annotated throughout in Wolfe's handwriting, verified by comparing it with samples of other documents he wrote that are in the British Museum. He inscribed his name inside the book, and made comments in the margins of the text. The smoking gun is that he underlined the verse about the paths of glory.

The book was listed in his personal effects by an officer who survived the battle and sent back home the effects of his deceased comrades. Wolfe was unmarried at the time, so his estate was inherited by his mother. She later gave the book to Wolfe's fiancée, who eventually married a duke. In turn, the book passed on to the duchess's maid, who wrote an inscription in the book explaining the history and that Wolfe had the book in his ship at Québec.

TCNS V3#1 (1938 Winter) had some mildly interesting articles not worth reviewing. I mention it though because it is a presentation copy by one of the contributors. Caradoc Evans had an article "Mary Webb" about a minor author. He inscribed this copy to Edith Nepean (scan on next page). That caught my eye because Nepean is a common place name in Canada. I checked Google and learned that Evans and Nepean were Welsh authors.

That raised an interesting question. TCNS was printed in New York City. This copy was mailed from there to Evans in Wales, who then made it a present to his Welsh friend who resided in London, England, at the time. Later in life she returned to Wales, as Wikipedia says she died in Llandudno in 1960. How then did it come to Calgary in the 1980s when I bought it in a now-vanished secondhand bookstore?

It can be safely guessed that when Nepean died, her family unloaded her books on a dealer. That seems the way for most heirs who have no interest in what Mom or Dad collected. From there, it seems most likely that it was sold by mail order by the dealer, probably to a Canadian collector whose estate in turn came on the market in the early 1980s. When my turn comes, my will specifies my library goes to the University of Calgary Library for their use or disposal. If they don't want it, they can sell it to another collector who does. I wonder how many more people will handle it before it crumbles into dust.



Edith Neff

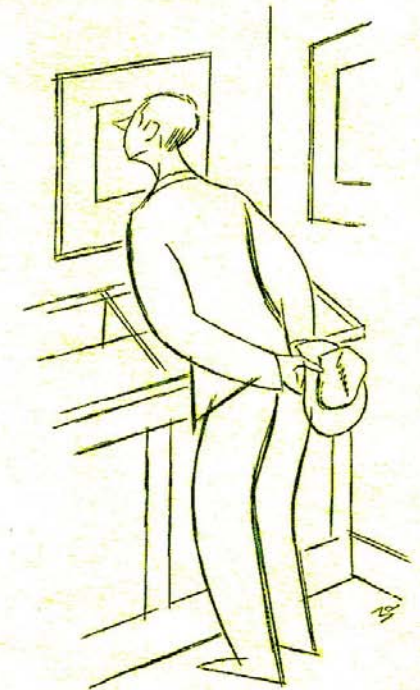
pm

Canoe Evans.

Reproduction Copy from
one of the contributors

concentrate full-time on the poem instead of after work hours or whenever he could get clear of family responsibilities.

The remaining articles are mildly interesting, but it is evident why this series eventually failed. Mildly interesting could be profitable for a regularly printed magazine, but hardcover publication was too expensive to carry the load. And so it ended.



the first exhibition of
artists' designs and authors' manuscripts
for the **COLOPHON**
a book collectors' quarterly

displayed in the exhibition room
of the pynson printers
through the summer, 1931
seventh floor · 229 west 43^d new york

*An advertisement tipped
into one of my copies.*

The Third Series.

I don't have any issues from the third series.

The Fourth And Final Series.

There always seemed to be someone willing to try publishing a hardcover magazine back then. THE NEW COLOPHON rose like a phoenix, edited in New York City and printed in Vermont by a Maine printer. The editorial board included some names from the first series, so the fourth series is considered as part of the same genealogy. I only have one issue, V2#5 dated 1949 January.

The lead article is a reprint of letters of Stephen Vincent Benét about how his great epic poem JOHN BROWN'S BODY came to be written. It is America's greatest epic poem, to that country what THE ILLIAD is to Greece. Benét was a struggling young poet with a wife and two young children when he wrote that poem. The letters illuminate his struggle to find the time and money to

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

[Editor’s remarks in square brackets. Please include your name and town when sending a comment. Email to opuntia57@hotmail.com]

FROM: Lloyd Penney
Etobicoke, Ontario 2017-01-27

OPUNTIA #362: [re: Calgary Christmas musicians] Toques on a cowboy hat. Well, if there’s anything more Canadian than that, I can’t think of it. I don’t get to downtown Toronto very much these days, so I don’t know what decorations were there. I am sure there were lots in the big buildings there, with homeless shoved to the side. Merry Christmas, indeed.

I agree, most newspapers will not exist in paper format within the next ten years or so. This will make it easier for most people to stay ignorant about the world around them, which in turn will allow politicians to do as they please without the knowledge of their electorate.

[I don’t think the death of newspapers would change much. Instead of people getting their misinformation from newspapers, they now get it from the Internet. The only difference is that newspapers could stifle opposing points of view by careful editing or complete omission, but on the Internet it is possible for others to push out corrections.]

With the recent deaths of Mary Tyler Moore and Mike Connors, I continue to feel like my own personal reality is falling apart, little bit by little bit. As I read your newest essay on The Man From U.N.C.L.E., I realized that of all the actors listed here, only David McCallum is left alive.

That’s an interesting photograph of the Queen visiting the bullion vaults of the Bank of England. I’ve read recently that many countries brag about their gold stores, but some of them truly have no gold at all. It’s only the reports of their gold hoards that props up their currencies.

[The other procedure that many central banks use is to lease their gold. The bars remain in the vaults as a condition of sale but are owned by someone else. Better yet, the same bar can be leased to multiple customers, each of whom thinks they have ownership of it. No inventory of serial numbers is ever published because most, if not all, of the customers have something to hide and would rather not have their local tax auditor find out about their assets. Anyone who questions whether the central bank actually has the gold is given the grand tour, and has their bars pointed out to them. The next customer to take the tour will have the same bars pointed out as theirs. That is why the gold futures market has ten times more electronic contracts than there are actual physical bars. Best of all, it’s legal. Whee! You do that with your business’s inventory and you will wind up in jail.]

OPUNTIA #363: Yes, it’s the country’s 150th anniversary of Confederation, and the celebration is called Canada 150. I remember the centennial year. Why isn’t anybody using the term sesquicentennial? Too many syllables?

[The main problem seems to be that the “qui” syllable trips up most tongues. Every time I try to speak that word, I have to slow down the pronunciation to avoid tangling it. The always friendly folks at Canada Revenue Agency are in the spirit of things; the envelope below came to me recently with their latest quarterly tax demand.]



I also remember the fuss over the Maple Leaf flag, too. Some of the designs reminded me of drawings 7-year-olds would make in art class at school, to go on the fridge at home. Such a political mess, and I know there are some who still don't like the single red leaf design.

OPUNTIA #364: I had the idea of putting together a steampunk anthology, and floated the idea to Edge Publishing, but true to my form, the Clockwork Canada anthology was in the publishing stages. Who knows, perhaps I can do another one at some point.

OPUNTIA #365: Tomorrow is indeed the Lunar New Year, and we are celebrating by going to this weekend's Toronto Tea Festival, held at the reference library downtown. The New Year will be the Year of the Rooster. The tea festival usually has some interesting giveaways for those of us who attend.

With our trip to England this past August, we did ride in the Tube a number of times. We're spoiled rotten in that in Toronto a flight of stairs will take you from Line 1 to Line 2. In London, to get from one line to another, it's long hallways, stairs here and there, fast escalators and sometimes, elevators, to get to where you want to go. The trains are fast and comfortable, although the Toronto trains are roomier.

Murray Moore is indeed the Secretary of the CSFFA, and I have accepted the position of Historian. I have yet to get anything done for them, given I am still not working, but I look forward to having some time to confirm the accuracy of past Aurora winners, and see what other news stories over the years could be inserted into the history of the CSFFA.

WHEN WORDS COLLIDE 2017

Calgary's annual readercon When Words Collide will be held this year on the weekend of August 11 to 13, at the Delta Calgary South Hotel on Southland Drive SE and Fairmount Drive. Details from www.whenwordscollide.org

WWC has a membership cap of 750 and usually sells out by June. The hotel is fully booked by then as well. The January progress report says that membership registration passed 350 at Christmas.

SEEN IN THE LITERATURE

Tai, H.C., et al (2017) **Chemical distinctions between Stradivari's maple and modern tonewood.** PROCEEDINGS OF THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES USA 114:27-32

Authors' abstract: *"There have been numerous attempts to elucidate the secrets of Stradivari violins, to explain why functional replacements have not been reproduced over the past two centuries. Whether there are systematic differences between Stradivari violins and later imitations has been heatedly debated. Our analysis of Stradivari's maples from three independent sources showed reproducible differences in chemical compositions compared with modern maples. Stradivari's use of mineral-treated maples belonged to a forgotten tradition unknown to later violin makers. His maple also appeared to be transformed by aging and vibration, resulting in a unique composite material unavailable to modern makers."*

"Analyses of maple samples removed from four Stradivari and a Guarneri instrument revealed highly distinct organic and inorganic compositions compared with modern maples. By solid-state 13C NMR spectroscopy, we observed that about one-third of hemicellulose had decomposed after three centuries, accompanied by signs of lignin oxidation. No apparent changes in cellulose were detected by NMR and synchrotron X-ray diffraction. By thermogravimetric analysis, historical maples exhibited reduced equilibrium moisture content."

"In differential scanning calorimetry measurements, only maples from Stradivari violins, but not his cellos, exhibited unusual thermooxidation patterns distinct from natural wood. Elemental analyses by inductively coupled plasma mass spectrometry suggested that Stradivari's maples were treated with complex mineral preservatives containing Al, Ca, Cu, Na, K, and Zn. This type of chemical seasoning was an unusual practice, unknown to later generations of violin makers. In their current state, maples in Stradivari violins have very different chemical properties compared with their modern counterparts, likely due to the combined effects of aging, chemical treatments, and vibrations."

Lansdall-Welfare, T., et al (2017) **Content analysis of 150 years of British periodicals.** PROCEEDINGS OF THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES USA 114:E457-E465

Authors’ abstract: *“Previous studies have shown that it is possible to detect macroscopic patterns of cultural change over periods of centuries by analyzing large textual time series, specifically digitized books. This method promises to empower scholars with a quantitative and data-driven tool to study culture and society, but its power has been limited by the use of data from books and simple analytics based essentially on word counts. This study addresses these problems by assembling a vast corpus of regional newspapers from the United Kingdom, incorporating very fine-grained geographical and temporal information that is not available for books. The corpus spans 150 years and is formed by millions of articles, representing 14% of all British regional outlets of the period. Simple content analysis of this corpus allowed us to detect specific events, like wars, epidemics, coronations, or conclaves, with high accuracy, whereas the use of more refined techniques from artificial intelligence enabled us to move beyond counting words by detecting references to named entities.”*

“These techniques allowed us to observe both a systematic under-representation and a steady increase of women in the news during the 20th century and the change of geographic focus for various concepts. We also estimate the dates when electricity overtook steam and trains overtook horses as a means of transportation, both around the year 1900, along with observing other cultural transitions. We believe that these data-driven approaches can complement the traditional method of close reading in detecting trends of continuity and change in historical corpora.”

Caswell, B.A., and C.L.J. Frid (2017) **Marine ecosystem resilience during extreme deoxygenation: the Early Jurassic oceanic anoxic event.** OECOLOGIA 183:275-290

Authors’ abstract: *“Global warming during the Early Jurassic, and associated widespread ocean deoxygenation, was comparable in scale with the changes projected for the next century. This study quantifies the impact of severe global environmental change on the biological traits of marine communities that define the ecological roles and functions they deliver. We document centennial-millennial variability in the biological trait composition of Early Jurassic (Toarcian) seafloor communities and examine how this changed during*

the event using biological traits analysis. Environmental changes preceding the global oceanic anoxic event (OAE) produced an ecological shift leading to stressed benthic palaeocommunities with reduced resilience to the subsequent OAE. Changes in traits and ecological succession coincided with major environmental changes; and were of similar nature and magnitude to those in severely deoxygenated benthic communities today despite the very different timescales. Changes in community composition were linked to local redox conditions whereas changes in populations of opportunists were driven by primary productivity.”

“Throughout most of the OAE substitutions by tolerant taxa conserved the trait composition and hence functioning, but periods of severe deoxygenation caused benthic defaunation that would have resulted in functional collapse. Following the OAE, recovery was slow probably because the global nature of the event restricted opportunities for recruitment from outside the basin. Our findings suggest that future systems undergoing deoxygenation may initially show functional resilience, but severe global deoxygenation will impact traits and ecosystem functioning and, by limiting the species pool, will slow recovery rates.”

WORLD WIDE PARTY ON JUNE 21

Founded by Benoit Girard (Quebec) and Franz Miklis (Austria) in 1994, the World Wide Party is held on June 21st every year. 2017 will be the 24th year of the WWP.

At 21h00 local time, everyone is invited to raise a glass and toast fellow members of the Papernet around the world. It is important to have it exactly at 21h00 your time. The idea is to get a wave of fellowship circling the planet. Rescheduling it to a club meeting or more convenient time negates the idea of a wave of celebration by SF fans and zinesters circling the globe.

At 21h00, face to the east and salute those who have already celebrated. Then face north, then south, and toast those in your time zone who are celebrating as you do. Finally, face west and raise a glass to those who will celebrate WWP in the next hour. Raise a glass, publish a one-shot zine, have a party, or do a mail art project for the WWP. Let me know how you celebrated the day.