



Books & People

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Sketches of the Great War from the Stacks:

The Many Faces of World War I

Stephanie Merchant, Circulation Assistant

It was supposed to be over in a matter of months, but it ended up lasting over four years. This year many institutions are offering centennial retrospectives on the First World War and its many aspects. Our own Library presented an exhibit on the literature and writings of the war back in 2014. It showed the importance of acquiring books on the subject at a time when many Americans wanted to ignore the European conflict. It was of particular interest to our Head Librarian then, Frank B. Bigelow.

Amongst the books added to the shelves at that time was one I recently found, with a fading and chipped binding, in the cartooning section. *"I Was There" with the Yanks on the Western Front: 1917-1919* (741.3 B) is the name of this astonishing collection of sketches, made throughout the war by the prolific 20th-century illustrator C.L. Baldrige.



Greetings from the Head Librarian

In a world grown increasingly divisive and uncivil, every day that I walk through the Library's doors, I'm reminded that there are still places where respect reigns, and small courtesies and considerations matter. To write that the Library is a haven from the nastiness that seems to be swirling about us is too simple. As a community, our Library society is so much more than that. Over the past year, I've had some of the most interesting, insightful, and tolerant conversations about the world around us right here in this building—through our discussions about the books and articles we've read, the people we've talked to, the places we've been.

On a member's recommendation, I've been reading Arlie Russell Hochschild's *Strangers in Their Own Land*. Hochschild explores the deepening divisions in the country by listening, by employing empathy. After the success of last June's conversation around asylum seekers, refugees, and immigrants, we want to expand our programming to include more conversations around current events, and we need your help. What topics would you like to explore? Who would you like to hear from? Would you be interested in leading the discussion? I'd love to hear from you. Stop by to see me, email me at cwaters@nysoclib.org, or call me at 212-288-6900.

In the meantime, meet me, your fellow members, and our Library guests around the tea cart every week-day at 3 PM in the Reference Room. Let's talk!

Carolyn

Great War Sketches from the Stacks: continued

He opens the book,

“It has been a keen regret to me that my artistic skill has been so unequal to these opportunities. The sketches do not sufficiently show war for the stupid horror I know it to be. I hope, however, they may serve as a record of [American Soldier] types, of the people he lived with in France, with whom he suffered and by whose side he fought.”



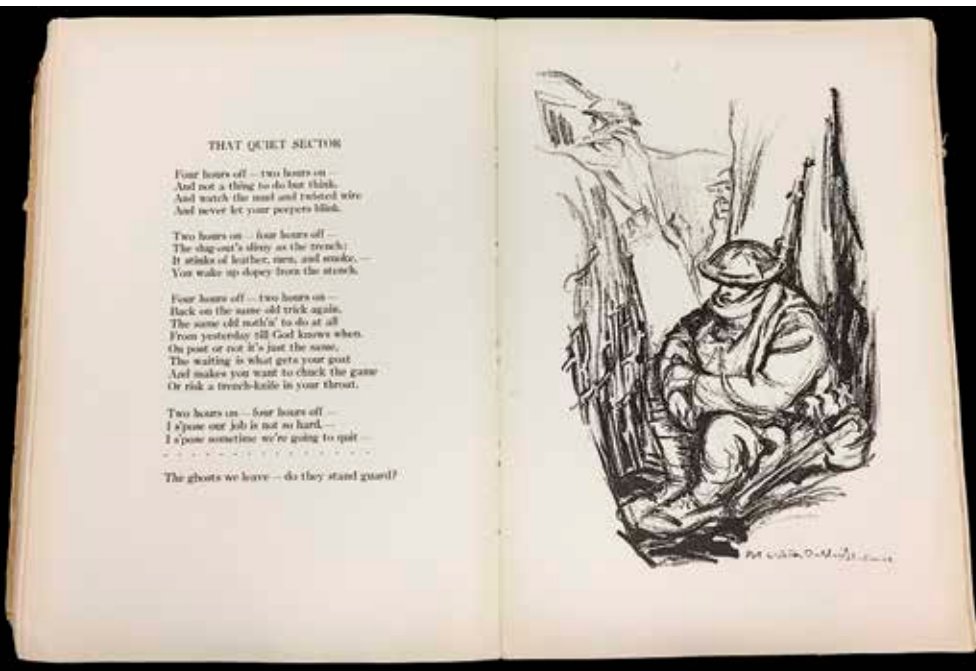
Illustrations by soldiers and artists in the trenches have a long history. Soldiers try to fill the endless stretches of boredom between intermittent lapses of endless horror. Intrepid reporters tirelessly work to use the art of sketching to bring to life the personal stories of those involved with a conflict. C.L. Baldrige's color and black-and-white sketches give us a glimpse of the day-to-day life of the soldiers. His work elicits the feeling of reality and empathy in the face of extreme trauma and brings color and humanity to the faces of the everyday men, women, and children caught in the crossfire in France. Where he truly excels is in the details of the faces, all different, and all alight with emotion and realism that brings the entire war close to us even today.

Cyrus Leroy Baldrige was born in 1889 and lived a vagabond life, with a traveling-saleswoman mother who left his father and took him at a young age. He was educated in illustration at the University of Chicago and graduated in 1911. He went to the French front lines in 1914, first as a correspondent and reporter, later as a volunteer stretcher bearer to the French army. After the United States' official entry into the war, he transferred to the American Expeditionary Forces (A.E.F.) as an infantry private on special duty with *Stars and Stripes*, the A.E.F.'s official newspaper. It was to *Stars and Stripes* that he contributed most of his artwork during the war.

This sketch collection, bound right after the end of the war in 1919, collects many of the illustrations Mr. Baldrige made over the years for *Stars and Stripes*. What really comes to life in them is the faces of soldiers of different nations and ethnicities from all over the world. This is an often-ignored aspect of the narrative of the war. What made the First World War a truly world war was not that there were fronts all over the world, but that soldiers were called to arms from all parts of the globe to fight, and often die, on the fields of France. Men

from Algeria, Senegal, and Morocco (all colonies under French control at the time), as well as American (both black and white), and French faces are illustrated side-by-side in this book. No man who served is allowed to be undocumented or forgotten.

A traveler by nature, Baldrige would continue his traveling and sketching for years after the war with his wife, Caroline Singer. His illustrated travelogues



of Asia and Africa are also available in the Library's collection. Ms. Singer would write the books completed by her husband's numerous artistic renderings of the people and scenery around them. They carried few to none of the usual preconceptions Westerners had when traveling to such vastly different cultures. What both Mr. Baldrige and Ms. Singer left us is a legacy of multiculturalism not typical of the generation shaped by the world conflict of their youth. Throughout their lives they remained committed to progress and peace throughout the world, and to bringing to others authentic visions from its different corners.

The entire sketch collection is punctuated with the poetic verses of A.E.F. Private Hilmar R. Baukhage, a compatriot of Baldrige's at *Stars and Stripes* as well as a fellow classman at the University of Chicago. Baukhage himself would later become a prominent voice and face of broadcast news, holding the distinction of being the newsman to break the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941. The following year, he became the first anchor on network television, for ABC.

His most stirring poem from this collection is "That Quiet Sector," which highlights the peculiar nature of boredom and horror that punctuated trench warfare.

"Four hours off—two hours on—
And not a thing to do but think...
...Two hours on—four hours off—
I s'pose our job is not so hard,—
I s'pose sometime we're going to quit.
The ghosts we leave—do they stand guard?"

"*I Was There*" is just one of the many fascinating gems found throughout the Library's stacks.

Securing the Library's Future

We are extraordinarily grateful to everyone who has provided for the New York Society Library in their estate plan through a bequest, charitable trust, or other planned gift. By doing so, they will be helping to sustain and strengthen the Library for years to come.

A bequest is a gift from your estate—a transfer of cash, securities, or other property made through your estate plan. You can make a bequest by including language in your will or living trust leaving a portion of your estate to the Library, or by designating it as a beneficiary of your retirement account or life insurance policy.

The Goodhue Society recognizes and honors those individuals who provide future support for the Library. It is named for Sarah Parker Goodhue, who in 1917 bequeathed the funds that made possible the purchase of the Rogers House on 79th Street as our fifth home. Each year, we host a special evening to celebrate the Goodhue Society; currently there are 77 members.

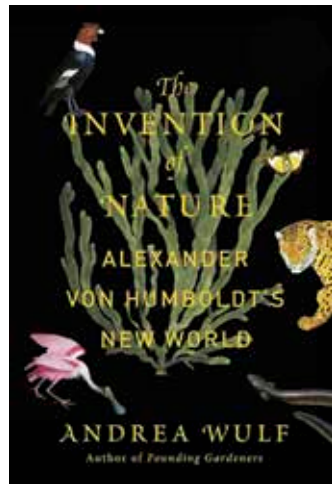
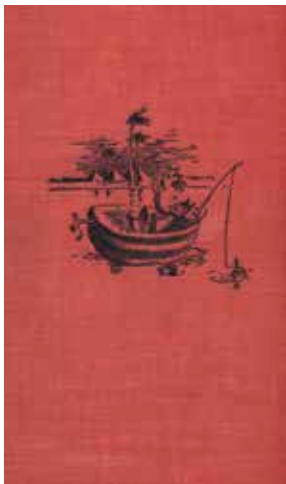
If you have already included the Library in your estate plan or would like more information, please contact **Joan Zimmert**, Director of Development at 212.288.6900 x207 or jzimmert@nysoclib.org.

What Stacks Up

Our short-term exhibition What Stacks Up: Favorite Books was on display in the Peluso Family Exhibition Gallery September 6-October 7.

In our society of dedicated readers, one question eternally recurs: if you had to pick one favorite book, which one would you take off the shelf for the umpteenth time? When we asked members and staff, their answers were delightful, quirky, and often unpredictable, ranging from *War and Peace*

to *Lucky Jim* to *Singing Family of the Cumberlands*. Here are a few of the recommendations and their beautiful covers; you can view them all at cityreaders.nysoclib.org/Gallery/84. You may be surprised, enchanted, or inspired by the titles we hold dear to our hearts.



Don Marquis

The Lives and Times of Archy & Mehitabel
Garden City, New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co. Inc., 1933

My father introduced me to this book many years ago—the concept of a book written in free verse on a typewriter by a literary male cockroach about himself and his friend, a savvy female alley cat, was too good to resist. And I return to the book again and again for humor and wisdom, as well as some history of the early 20th century and the challenge of reading Archy's free verse!

ELIZABETH DOBELL (member)

Andrea Wulf

The Invention of Nature: Alexander von Humboldt's New World
New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2015

Truly a beautiful book about a giant of the 19th century. I swam in the Humboldt Current and marveled at this genius who saw all things connected, even me and the ocean.

DIANE FULLER (member)

Susan Hill

Howard's End is on the Landing: A Year of Reading from Home
London: Profile Books, 2009

I enjoyed this as much for the content, as for the fact that it inspired me to begin reading all the books I've had on my bookshelves for years (decades!) and have been "intending" to get to...

MADELEINE SHAPIRO (member)

Lauren Belfer

And After the Fire
New York: HarperCollins Publisher, 2016

This book bridges the gap between cultures from Nazi Germany to present-day New York City. It demonstrates how meaningful relationships in the past, music, and promises kept can make lives whole and meaningful again.

MERCEDES A. YOUMAN (member)

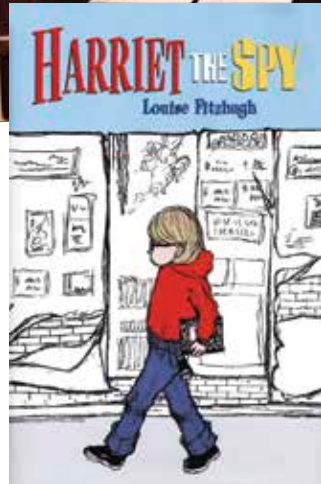
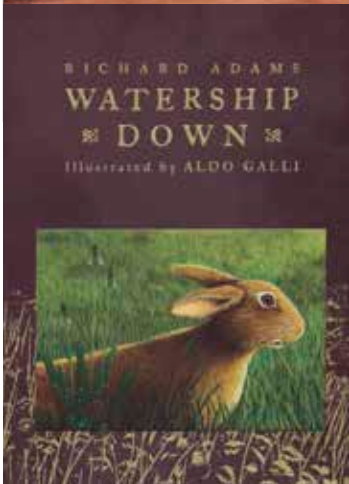
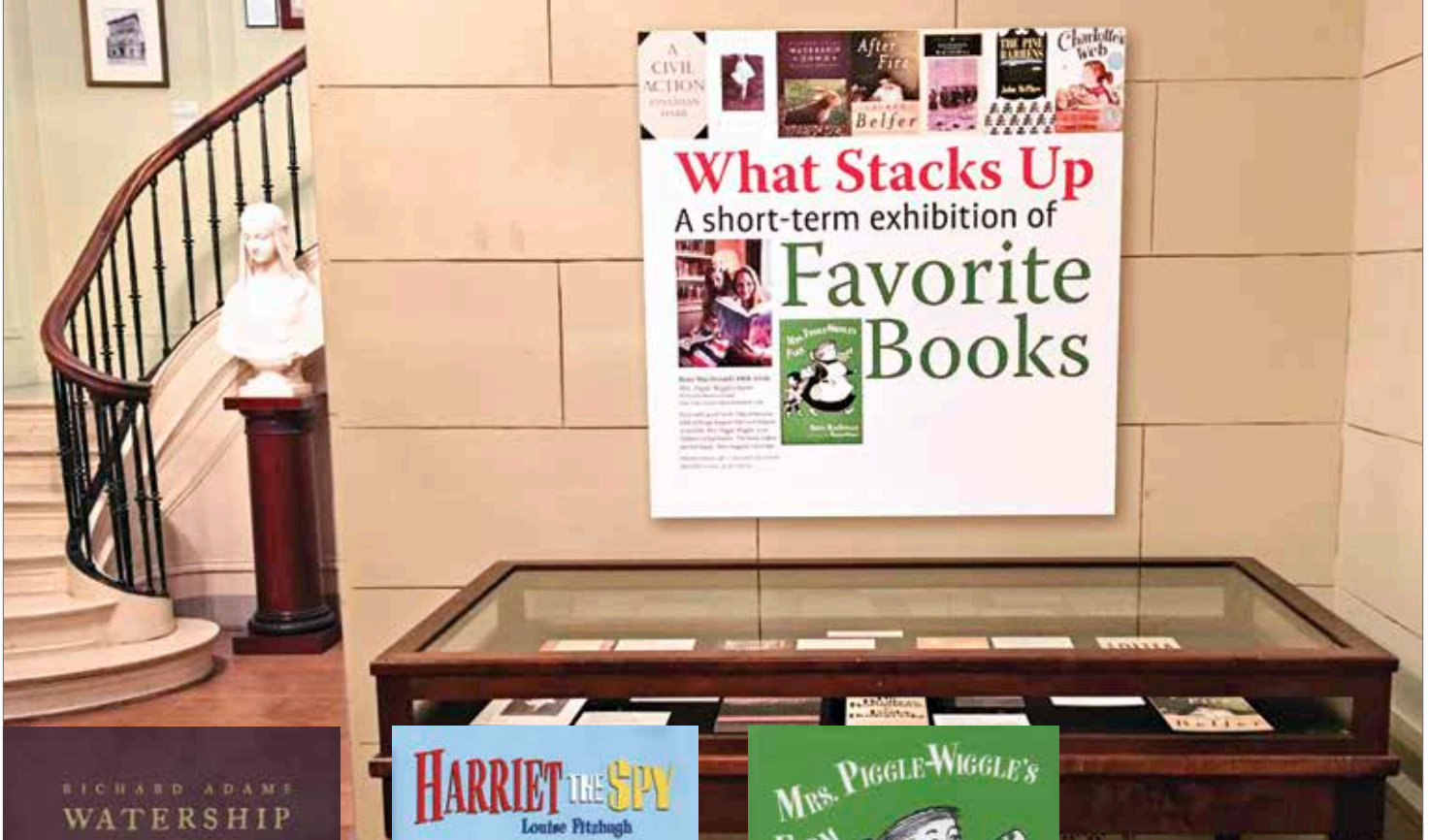


Photo by Harriet Shapiro

Richard Adams
Watership Down

New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2012

I have loved *Watership Down* since middle school. It was enormously popular when it first came out, but to me it is still a classic. Although I'm not usually one to enjoy anthropomorphizing animals, this book touched me to the core, and still does.

LINDA OGDEN-WOLGEMUTH (member)

Louise Fitzhugh
Harriet the Spy

New York: Delacorte Press, 2000

I grew up in a small Southern town, so when I was a child Harriet's life in the big city was as fascinating and foreign to me as that of Pippi Longstocking or Laura Ingalls Wilder. As an adult, I have come to appreciate the depth and nuance of this coming-of-age novel. It resonates with me still and it is a book I go back to when I need the comfort of an old friend.

With a Manhattan-dwelling school-age daughter of my own, I also connect with it on new levels now—for example, the scene when Harriet says goodbye to Ole Golly, her beloved nanny, is all the more heartbreaking having seen firsthand the bond between my city child and her first caregiver. The book was quietly revolutionary in its time and is relevant and meaningful still. I can't wait to share it with my daughter.

MEREDITH L. STRAUSS (member)

Betty MacDonald
Mrs. Piggle-Wiggle's Farm

Pictures by Maurice Sendak
New York: HarperCollins Publishers: 1982

It's a really good book. I like it because a lot of things happen that can't happen in real life. Mrs. Piggle-Wiggle cures children of bad habits. The book makes me feel happy. She's magical. I love her.

FELICITY STRAUSS, age 7 (member)

Profiling Special Collections

Private press editions are but one example of the many kinds of materials that comprise the Society Library's Special Collections. Behind closed doors (and in our online catalog) one can find all sorts of varied subjects, collections, and ephemera given to—or collected by—the Library over the centuries.

Newspapers, Pamphlets, and Broad­sides: The Society Library has been collecting these ephemeral materials since the late 18th century, documenting the important events of those times, and leading to an impressive collection today. Highlights from our collection include copies of New York City's first weekly newspaper, William Bradford's *New York Gazette*, and John Peter Zenger's *New York Weekly Journal*. We also hold a large collection of 18th-century political pamphlets, and have fully cataloged our broadsides collection.

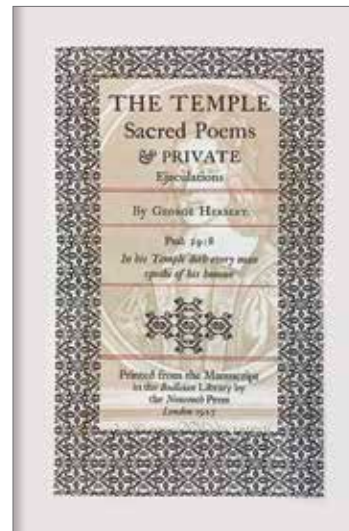
Manuscripts Collection: The manuscript collection is comprised largely of the papers of the Goodhue, Harison, and Bowne families, and primarily consists of letters and personal and family archival collections. Included in these collections are letters from early American political figures such as Alexander Hamilton, Aaron Burr, and Thomas Jefferson.

Archives: The Library's institutional archives were recently fully processed. A finding aid is available online via our *City Readers* portal. Our records go back to the NYSL's founding in 1754 and continue through the present. You will find information about Library catalogs, shareholder records, building and circulation records, correspondence, minutes, and more.

For more information about Special Collections, visit our website or contact Barbara Bieck, bbieck@nysoclib.org.

Spotlight: Special Collections

Barbara Bieck, Special Collections Librarian



Full red brocade binding for Herbert's *The Temple: Sacred Poems & Private Ejaculations*, published by Nonesuch Press. *The Temple* title page, with offset from verso frontispiece.

Part of the joy of working with Special Collections is coming across interesting and intriguing items whenever I work in the rare stacks. The above item caught my eye while shelving the other day, and I couldn't resist picking it off the shelf and thumbing through. The full red brocade binding is a stunning exemplar of the detail put into private press endeavors from the early 20th century.

This printing of *The Temple: Sacred Poems & Private Ejaculations* by George Herbert was published by Nonesuch Press in London, 1927. Founded in 1923 by Francis Meynell, Nonesuch Press joins the ranks of the private press movement, begun around the turn of the 20th century, focusing on the art and craft of book production. Private presses generally published editions in short print runs on small presses rather than the large machines used by commercial printers to produce thousands of copies per print run. These private presses produced exquisite works, with fine materials such as handmade papers, hand-set type, hand bookbinding, etc. These details meant that private press books were usually priced beyond the reach of an average book buyer. Seeing this cost difference, the owner of Nonesuch Press sought to bring private press books into a more commercial market. Nonesuch Press set itself apart from other private presses by using a small hand press to design its books, then having the printing and binding of its books completed by commercial printers.

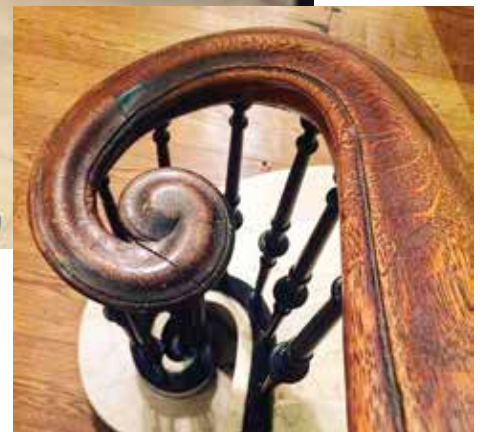
The Temple is just one of the many examples of private press items in the Society Library's Special Collections. *The Temple* is also an item from the Sharaff-Sze Collection, a gift of nearly 800 books from the estates of Irene Sharaff and her partner Mai-Mai Sze. You can explore the other items in this collection by visiting the Library's online catalog and searching for "Sharaff-Sze Collection (New York Society Library)" in the author field.

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The New York World of Willa Cather



Willa Cather on the phone at *McClure's Magazine*, c. 1906-1907
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