

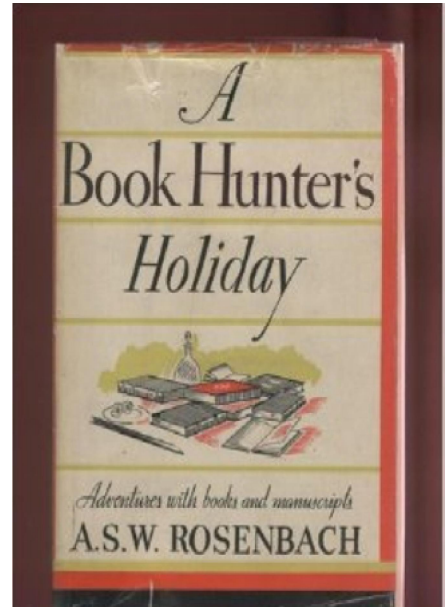
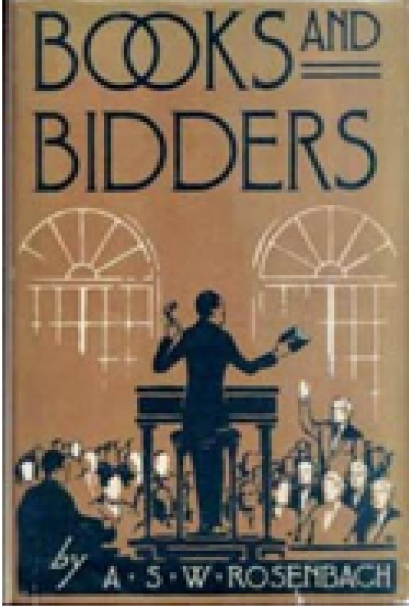
BCD

# SPEAKING OF BOOKS

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## A. S. W. ROSENBACH: BOOK DEALER EXTRAORDINAIRE By Paula Jarvis



Dr. A. S. W. Rosenbach

Left and right, two of Rosenbach's own works: *Books and Bidders* (1927) and *A Book Hunter's Holiday* (1936).

One of Philadelphia's most famous sons was Dr. A. S. W. Rosenbach (1876-1952), a book collector, scholar, and dealer in rare books and manuscripts who collaborated with his wealthy clients to establish some of the finest private libraries in America. Working with Henry E. Huntington and Henry Clay Folger, Rosenbach helped assemble the collections of the Huntington Library in San Marino, California, and the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, D.C. Other famous clients included J. P. Morgan (whose mansion and book collections became the Morgan Library & Museum in New York), Lessing Rosenwald (the Sears Roebuck magnate who bequeathed his collections to the Library of Congress and the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.), and Harry

Elkins Widener (a bibliophile who died on the Titanic at the age of 27 and was memorialized by his mother through her donation to Harvard for the Henry Elkins Widener Memorial Library).

### EARLY YEARS

Born on July 22, 1876, in Philadelphia, Abraham Simon Wolf Rosenbach was the youngest of seven children (or perhaps eight, depending on source) whose parents, Morris Rosenbach and Isabella H. Pollock, pampered their bookish youngest child. As a boy, he spent much of his time in the antiquarian bookshop of his maternal uncle, Moses Pollock, whose famous establishment, Pollock's, was located at 406 Commerce Street in Philadelphia.

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## BOOK COLLECTING BEGINS

When he made his entrance into the world of book collecting as a youngster, he couldn't afford the \$24 he had bid at a book auction for an illustrated edition of Reynard the Fox. However, being the nephew of Moses Pollock, he was able to work out an arrangement and continue his book collecting career. (Pollock, who also collected children's books, later willed his holdings to his nephew, who added to the collection until it comprised 816 American children's books dating from 1682 to 1836.) In 1947, Rosenbach donated this collection to the Free Library of Philadelphia, where it formed the beginning of the library's collection of early American children's books.

When Rosenbach was a freshman at the University of Pennsylvania (B.S., 1898, Ph.D., 1901), he made his first really important purchase, one that foretold his future success. For just \$3.60, he bought a first edition of Dr. Johnson's prologue at the opening of Drury Lane Theatre in 1747. He later received (and refused) an offer of \$5,000 for this early acquisition.

## A CAREER CHANGE

From 1895 until 1901, Rosenbach was a teaching fellow in the English department at the University of Pennsylvania. He seemed destined for a life in academia, but ill health and lack of finances forced him to join his older brother Philip in a new venture, the Rosenbach Company, founded in 1903 with A. S. W. handling books and Philip handling antiques. Of this career change, Rosenbach wrote in *Books and Bidders*:

*"I felt a renegade. I had deserted the halls of learning for the bookshop; I had given up my fellowship to enter a business that would, perhaps, put money in my purse. I did not, when at college, appreciate what a high adventure the business was to prove, the excitement and anxiety of the chase, and that I had a better chance, a far greater opportunity, to unearth unpublished documents, and uncover original source-material, than ever I could have as an instructor in English in some university."*



Barronial splendor, the book room of the Rosenbach's last "store" in New York, 322 East 57th Street.

Before long, the firm was buying entire libraries, and in 1947 Rosenbach set a record when he bought a copy of the Bay Psalm Book for \$151,000. During his lifetime, he is believed to have spent a total of more than \$75 million on his purchases.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In addition to his collections of English literature and Americana, Rosenbach bought eight Gutenberg Bibles and more than 30 Shakespeare first folios, published many bibliographical and literary articles, wrote *Early American Children's Books* (a 1933 checklist that is still a standard reference), established the Rosenbach Fellowship in Bibliography at the University of Pennsylvania, and, shortly before his death on July 1, 1952, bequeathed his estate to the Rosenbach Foundation, which had been established in 1950 to foster interest in books, paintings, and other works of art.

Rosenbach is credited with popularizing the collecting of works by American writers at a time when serious bibliophiles collected only European literature; he also promoted the idea of book collecting as an investment opportunity and encouraged the less-wealthy collectors he worked with to explore new and less-expensive avenues of collecting, such as children's books.

## ROSENBACH MUSEUM & LIBRARY

In addition to helping his clients build their libraries, Rosenbach kept many items for his own collections, which can now be seen in the Rosenbach Museum & Library along with his brother's antiques. Among their many treasures are fine examples of 18th-century English and American furniture and portraits, King Charles II's document chest, Herman Melville's bookcase, Robert Burns's powder horn, and Lord Byron's calling-card case. The Americana collection includes letters of Hernán Cortés and Francisco Pizarro, the first books printed in the western hemisphere (1543 in Mexico, 1584 in Peru, and 1881 in Cambridge, where the Bay Psalm Book was the first book to be printed in the American colonies), and the earliest known letter of George Washington.

Other highlights include the manuscript of James Joyce's *Ulysses* (purchased in 1924) and 80 per cent of Joseph Conrad's manuscripts (the bulk of which was purchased in 1923). Among the most prominent and popular displays are the works of two American artists who knew each other: poet Marianne Moore and children's book illustrator Maurice Sendak. Before Moore died in 1972, Sendak, who was her neighbor in New York's Greenwich Village, persuaded her to sell her papers to the Rosenbach. She agreed but stipulated that it also install the parlor of her apartment in the library. Thus, visitors to the Rosenbach Museum & Library can now see Moore's furniture, animal figurines, works of art, typewriter, baseballs signed by Yogi Berra and Mickey Mantle, and an exercise bar hanging over a closet door.

## THE ROSENBACH'S FUTURE

In spring of 2013, the Free Library of Philadelphia and the Rosenbach Museum & Library agreed to merge, thereby creating The Rosenbach of the Free Library of Philadelphia Foundation. The affiliation brings together two of the world's preeminent collections of rare books, artifacts, and manuscripts. The Rosenbach of the Free Library will remain at its current Delancey Place location, will be maintained under the Free Library of Philadelphia Foundation, and will be funded through private philanthropic support.



*The Rosenbach Museum & Library is housed in two townhouses located in Philadelphia's historic Rittenhouse Square neighborhood. The townhouse at 2008 Delancey Street was the residence of the two Rosenbach brothers, both lifelong bachelors.*

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Dear friends,

It is a great honor to be the 36th person to serve as president of the Book Club of Detroit. Among my distinguished predecessors, to name just a few, are artist Bill Bostick, publisher Frazer Clark (whose father of the same name was the first principal of Detroit's Mumford High School), former Burton Historical Collection director Jim Babcock, DPL Rare Book Room curators Gloria Francis and Janet Whitson, my professor of cataloging Barry Neavill of Wayne State, and, like me, former Gale Research staffers Bob Thomas and Annie Brewer. I am humbled to be the successor to many great Detroiters who came from many different occupations, but were united by their passion for the book.

Our club has been known for offering its members and the community at large interesting and engaging programs, and this year will be no exception. On March 25, Gene Alloway will speak on "The Future of the Bookshop" at Kiernan's Steak House in Dearborn. This will be our last event at Kiernan's, as they will close their business in the spring. On May 6, we will host Teresa K. Irish, the author of *A Thousand Letters Home: The WWII Correspondence of Aarol W. "Bud" Irish*, at Detroit's Traffic Jam & Snug. We are still developing the rest of the year's schedule. If you have any ideas, would like to plan an event, or would like to make a presentation to the membership, please let me know.

Our club's activities are made possible through membership dues and our annual book auction. Thanks to everyone who donated and/or purchased auction books in December, to those who have already paid their 2014 dues, and one member who already contributed an auction item for next December's dinner. If you have not yet paid your membership dues for 2014, it is not too late to do so. Remember that membership is for the calendar year, ending on December 31. If you are not certain of your membership status, please contact our treasurer, Maurice Barie ([mojoconsult@sbcglobal.net](mailto:mojoconsult@sbcglobal.net)). Membership rates remain the same as last year.

Any member in good standing may serve on our club's board. We currently have openings for secretary and three at-large members. We meet once monthly, usually on the third Tuesday, over dinner at Traffic Jam. If you are interested in serving, please contact me.

I am happy to announce that our website, [www.bookclubofdetroit.org](http://www.bookclubofdetroit.org), has been completely updated. In addition to some minor edits (including adding my beloved Oxford comma where appropriate), you will find an up-to-date list of events, links to fellow FABS-member club websites, and a list of our past presidents. Also be sure to "like" our Facebook page, [www.facebook.com/BookClubofDetroit](http://www.facebook.com/BookClubofDetroit).

I hope to see you at a future club event, either to say hello again or to meet for the first time.

With best regards,

Frank Castronova  
[tischronova@wowway.com](mailto:tischronova@wowway.com)

## BCD EVENT BRIEFS and NEWS

By Beverly Ostrowiecki, Robert K. Jones, Maurice Barie (photos)

Our BCD summer event featured a presentation by Joan Knoertzer and Twyla Racz on miniature books. Tiny in format, these books pack volumes of text and illustrations that can boggle the mind with their compactness and detail. Knoertzer has about 4500 miniatures in her collection and especially likes poetry and prayer books. She showed her Joan of Arc, which she commissioned artist Randy Apslund. Racz specializes in miniatures about Christmas and cats.



Twyla Racz holding miniature pop up.



Joan Knoertzer cradling her commissioned Joan of Arc miniature.

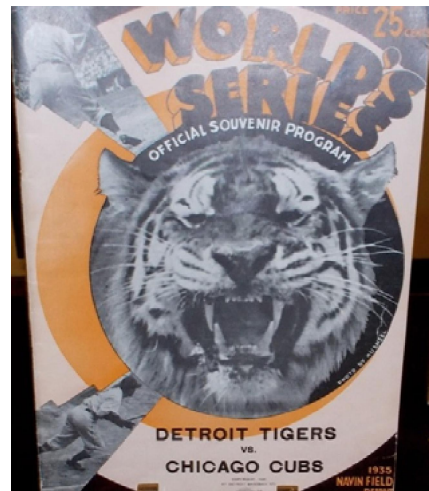
The Detroit Public Library (DPL) Friends Foundation invited BCD members to its annual Mary Adelaide Hester Lecture in September. The discussion of notable items from the Detroit Public Library Special Collections featured a display of nearly 30 treasures.

Mark Bowden, DPL special collections coordinator, showcased the items including George Washington's diary (1789-1790), the Belle Isle deed and wampum belt. Belle Isle was purchased from the Ottawa Indians in 1769 for 7 barrels of rum, 3 rolls of tobacco, and 3 pounds of vermilion. The wampum belt illustrates fine craftsmanship with its beads and geometric pattern. A wampum belt is a traditional Native American artifact that marks an exchange or agreement.

The DPL collection also has memorabilia about the Detroit Tiger, autos, Jackson Five, and a note from Mahatma Gandhi to Roland Hayes.



Chrysler Viper brochure in DPL collection.



Detroit Tigers 1939 program in DPL collection.

## BCD EVENT BRIEFS AND NEWS

We sponsored a November gathering entitled “The Potpourri of a Collector with an Obsessive Will.” This eventide event was held at the lovely and book filled home of Joel and Judith Adelman. Judy presented the inside view of her life-long odyssey of collecting, and now disbursing. Members viewed the rich cross-section of the Adelman collection that included illustrations by Rackham and Crane and children’s books signed by Sendak and Feiffer. Judy’s instructional talk, and Joel’s Seneca-like commentary and humorous asides, enabled the club to share in the angsts and paeans of their collecting travels, and now, disbursing labors. Judy had about 16,000 books in her collection before she began her disposition program. After sales by Heritage Auction and donations to libraries, she has 10,000 remaining.

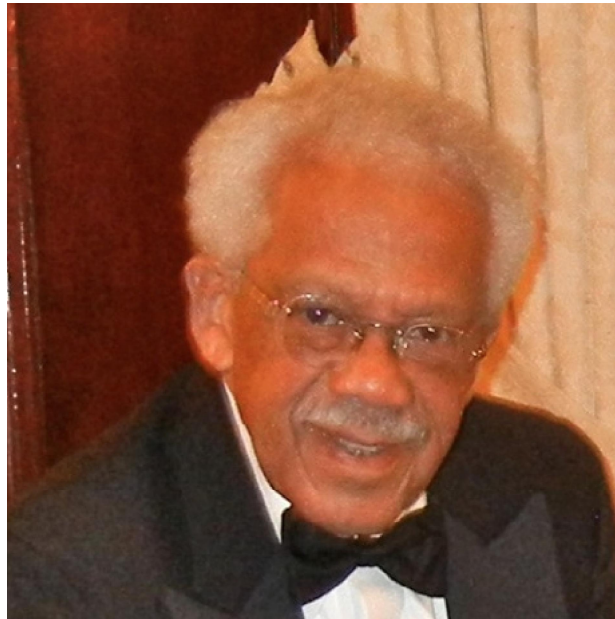
Our Christmas dinner theme was “Year of Italian Culture in America.” Dr. Raffaele De Benedictis, Associate Professor of Italian at Wayne State University, gave an entertaining talk. The Quarto String Quartet, including Cathy Compton, a BCD and Detroit Symphony Orchestra member, played while we browsed about 30 books, donated by members, in our silent auction.



Mary Clare Duran, BCD speaker, dwarfed by The Detroit Club fireplace.

### OUTSTANDING SERVICE BY ROBERT K. JONES

We give a heartfelt “THANK YOU” to Robert K. Jones for his dedication to BCD. Jones graciously led BCD as president for three years, giving him the third longest presidential tenure in the history of the club since 1958.



Robert K. Jones, BCD President 2011-2013, author, gentleman.

Jones’ service to BCD fostered friendships and willingness to participate in club activities. “He is such a gentleman. I called him Sir Robert. It was a joy to work with him! Sir Robert made a difference to the club in two very important ways. First, his open and honorable manner encouraged you to volunteer for the club again and again. Second, his note writing. He wrote personalized thank you notes expressing gratitude to all those who contributed to the club. Members felt appreciated and valued, which helped engage members and stimulated ongoing involvement.” said C. Hedger Breed, BCD president just prior to Jones.

We warmly wish you the best in your upcoming endeavors! Be it writing sequels to your published books: *The Last Sleigh Ride: A Detroit Folk History* (2010) or *True Colors: Detroit’s Fall Tour Guide* (2008) or creating new projects. We all look forward to seeing Sir Robert and his lovely wife, Jo-Anne, at BCD events.

Visit [Burning Viper Books](#) for more insight on this creative man and to purchase his books. Purchases can also be made at select booksellers, [Burning Viper Books](#), [abebooks.com](#), and [amazon.com](#).

## BCD NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

### IN MEMORIAM

Harriet Pauline Brink Larson, 89, of Livonia, Michigan, died January 10, 2014 in Normal, IL. She was born July 22, 1924 in Kansas City, MO, the daughter of Paul and Maude Koken Brink. She graduated from the University of Kansas, Kansas City. She married John Larson in 1949 and moved to Montana. She moved many times with her family finally settling in Livonia, MI all the while teaching at various schools.

Harriet's love of books and her service to The Friends of the Library is legendary. She was a founding member of The Michigan Friends of the Library and a past President of The Friends of the Library in Livonia, Michigan. She also was instrumental in founding The Book Sale of Livonia Public Library. She had many interests: travel, cooking, and local history.

Her many friends will miss her greatly. Her memorial Mass was held at St. Patrick's Church, Bloomington. Burial will be at Great Lakes National Cemetery, Holly, MI. In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to the The Friends of the Livonia Library, 32777 5 Mile Rd, Livonia, MI 48154 or to Clare House 703 E Washington St, Bloomington, IL 61701. To express condolences online, please visit <http://www.carmodyflynn.com/obituaries/item/112.html>.

Floyd Johnson, BCD Life Member, passed away in June 2013. Floyd lived his latter years in Arizona. According to his wife, Gillian Grafton, "... the club has given him so much pleasure over the years." BCD appreciates Floyd's generosity and love of the club. Dismayed at not being able to be more involved in club events, Floyd offered his large collection of BCD ephemera and memorabilia to the club, which we gratefully accepted and now hold in our archives. BCD honored Floyd with the club's special bookplate bearing his name and mounted in a Detroit Public Library book related to his collecting interests.

### APPRECIATION AND GRATITUDE



*Robert K. Jones presenting, at 2012 Christmas party, a plaque designed by him to Joann and Ned Chalet in honor of their book collecting excellence and commitment to BCD.*

### BIG WELCOME TO FRANK CASTRONOVA, NEW BCD PRESIDENT



Frank Castronova brings expertise honed by various editorial roles at Gale Research and serving several Detroit-area nonprofit organizations. His book collecting interests include Judaic and Protestant prayer books and publishing of 19th and early 20th century books. From his inaugural president's letter in this newsletter, we can likely expect noteworthy historical factoids and sharp focus on building BCD's future.