

ABC NEWSLETTER

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1997-98 Officers and Committees

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Billie Levy

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1997 ABC Calendar

- May 7 Annual Meeting of the ABCs. Members' accomplishments will be highlighted: books and articles written or illustrated by members, and members' work honored or included in publications. Connecticut Historical Society, 1 Elizabeth St., Hartford, CT, 7:00 P.M.
- June 19 Ann Conally Hughey, author of the first bibliography of books illustrated by Edmund Dulac, will present a slide talk, "Edmund Dulac: American Artist?" At the Connecticut Historical Society, 1 Elizabeth St., Hartford, CT, 7:00 P.M. A potluck supper will be held at the home of Billie Levy, 7 Craigmoor Road, West Hartford, at 4:00 P.M., before the talk.
- Sept. 12 Jane Pomeroy will present a slide talk, "Alexander Anderson." Connecticut Historical Society, 1 Elizabeth St., Hartford, CT, 7:00 P.M.
- Oct. 1 The ABCs will visit the Dartmouth College Library, Hanover, N.H. Philip N. Cronenwett, curator of manuscripts and chief of special collections, will lead us on a gallery talk through the exhibit.
- Nov. 15–16 The 1997 Connecticut Children's Book Fair: "Celebrating Children and the Books They Read." Bishop Center, University of CT at Storrs. 10 :00 A.M.–5 :00 P.M., Saturday and Sunday. Proceeds will benefit The Northeast Children's Literature Collections in the Dodd Research Center at UConn.

A Thank You

Our thanks to Elizabeth Moody and Roger Crossgrove, who so creatively chaired our program committee last year. With plans completed for the coming year's programs, they express a hope that the functions of the program committee in the future will be shared by a greater number of ABC members, whose ideas and contacts will enrich us all.

If two heads are better than one, think what 30 might come up with!

1997 Book Fairs

June 1	New England Ant Bk Fr	Concord, NH
June 22	Portland Book, Print & Paper Show	Portland, ME
June 28	Cooperstown Antiquarian Bk Fr	Cooperstown, NY
July 12	Stockbridge Antiquarian Bk Fr	Stockbridge, MA
July 20	Cape Cod Book, Print & Paper Show	Hyannis, MA
July 26	Antiquarian Bk Fr at Searles Castle	Great Barrington, MA
Aug. 3	Pomfret Book Fair	Pomfret, VT
Aug. 10	Westchester Ant. Bk & Ephemera Fr	Tarrytown, NY
Sept. 13	Old Sturbridge Village Ant Bk Fr	Sturbridge, MA
Sept. 27–28	Boxborough Paper & Collectible Show	Boxborough, MA
Sept. 28	Equinox Bk Fr	Manchester, VT
Oct. 3–4	MARIAB Fall Bk Fr	Andover, MA
Oct. 17–18	Sheffield Berkshire Ant Bk Fr	Sheffield, MA
Oct. 19	Amherst Ant Bk Fr	Amherst, MA
Oct. 25–26	Trinity Ant Bk Fr	New York, NY
Nov. 1–2	Long Island Ant Bk Fr	Albertson, NY
Nov. 15–16	Ant Bk & Paper Show at the Garage	Boston, MA
Dec. 13	Big Paper & Collectible Show	Marlborough, MA.

Listings by Billie Levy

“Just Go to Day’s”¹
Mahlon Day,
Children’s Toy Books Publisher

Gary E. Wait

*And here behold in fair array,
A part of this her work,
Printed and sold by Mahlon Day,
Who lives in famed New-York.*

*In Pearl-Street stands his handsome store,
The number we affix,
In figures marked above the door,
Three hundred seventy-six.*

So proclaimed Mahlon Day, New York publisher of children’s toy books, in this poetic jingle appended to his 1830 edition of Avis Howland’s *Rhode Island Tales*. To make the point still more vivid for his youthful customers—and their parents—Day has added a charming woodcut of his shop, with its name, “Mahlon Day’s Juvenile Bookstore,” prominently displayed above the door, before which two kind-hearted children dispense alms to a disabled sailor.

The little book proved popular enough to reissue in 1833—but with a footnote appended to the last line of the jingle: “Removed in 1833, to No. 374, first door below.” Between 1830 and 1833, Day had moved next door to larger quarters. Rather than reset the line or upset the jingle’s rhyme, Day had added a footnote, advising the public of his new address.

In the early decades of the Nineteenth Century, an address in Pearl Street represented a prime retail location. In another of his publications, *Picture of New York*, Day, or another anonymous author (perhaps Mrs. Day), describes the “wonderful

variety of fine wares to be found there and the goods available to merchants from all parts of the United States”—noting, of course, the impressive assortment of “little books for little folks” to be had at his own shop.

Business was good—at least for Day; and by late in the 1820s, he was beginning to cast about for more spacious premises in which to display his expanding stock in trade. He had been in Pearl Street since 1823; and from 1825 he had done a thriving business at “No. 376.” Reluctant to leave the location with which his name had been associated for almost a decade, Day was delighted to learn sometime in 1832 that the property of his next-door neighbor and fellow Quaker, Goold Brown, might be for sale.

Brown had begun his career in 1806, at the age of 15, in the Providence cotton manufacturing firm of Almy and Brown; but after about a year, he had abandoned business for literature. For the next half-dozen years, Goold Brown attended a variety of private academies, and taught briefly at the Friends’ Boarding School in Dutchess County, New York. In 1813 he moved to New York City to accept a teaching position; and two years later, he opened an academy of his own. There he continued to teach for nearly two decades; and there he had written a series of school grammars that had established his reputation as an educator. Published by Samuel Wood & Co.,² their sales had encouraged Brown to undertake a comprehensive grammar of the English language.

Never physically robust, however, Brown found his health deteriorating under the incessant strain of operating an academy, teaching, and working on his books. By 1832 he had determined to abandon the academy and sell the property in Pearl Street on which it was located, in order to devote all his energies to the completion of his *Grammar of English Grammars*, as he called his projected work.

Drawn together by common professional interests, as well as by the proximity of their business premises and their common allegiance to the Quaker faith, Day and Brown’s publisher, Samuel Wood had in 1829 mediated a property transfer between Brown and one John R. Willis. Thereafter, Day’s name occurs frequently in Brown’s surviving correspondence with his brother,³ where he is referred to as “neighbor and good friend.” In 1830 we find Brown assisting his brother William in the choice of a selection of books from Day’s stock destined for the common school library of Lynn, Massachusetts.

Just when Brown began to intimate to his neighbor that his academy and the property on which it stood might be for sale is uncertain. But by the middle of Twelfth Month (i.e., December) 1832,⁴ Brown was ready to sell, and Day was asking him to fix a price.

Taking the advice of Richard Wood, Brown offered the property to Mahlon Day for the sum of \$12,000, or in exchange for Day's newly constructed house in Henry Street. By the eleventh of First Month (January) 1833, Brown had accepted Day's counter offer of \$12,000, with the proviso that Brown might retain the use of the attic study in the academy building until he could find other suitable quarters for his personal library and research materials. On 2d Fifth Month (May 2) the agreement was finalized.

Almost immediately Day set about improving the property, "pulling down my store in front," Brown notes, in order to erect another "five stories [sic] high." Additional construction on the site would continue for another two years, as Day further adapted the premises to what had become, by then, the most thriving trade in children's books in the city.

Seeing the fruits of his neighbor's industry, Brown was prone to second thoughts. "Mahlon Day is going ahead and getting rich," he wrote his brother late in 1836. John Wood⁵ hadn't made matters any easier by asserting that he would have given Brown's full asking price "but for interfering with Mahlon." But with typical Quaker integrity, Brown added: "I replied . . . 'tis sold now; and if it is worth more, so much the better for Mahlon.' I have no doubt he will do well by the purchase. . . ."

He did—for Day continued to operate a thriving business in children's books from "No. 374" until his retirement in 1846. And so, in fact, did Brown. The income from the sale of his academy freed him of the burden of full-time teaching, and left him the leisure to labor on with his Grammar, which he finally completed in 1851.

Notes

I. The title of this essay is taken from one of Day's many advertising jingles:

*When passing through the crowded street,
And anxious longing for a treat,
'Tis certain that a book's the best;
Just go to Day's—you'll know the rest.*

2. Samuel Wood, who published Goold Brown's first grammars, operated a thriving trade in children's books from various Pearl Street locations between 1804 and 1836 in his own name and under the name Samuel Wood and Sons.
3. Reverences to Brown's correspondence with his brother, Dr. William B. Brown on Lynn, Massachusetts, *passim*, are drawn from an unpublished collection of letters from Goold to William Brown (1817–1838) in the author's personal collection.
4. Brown follows the traditional Quaker formula for dating his letters, denoting the months by their numerical position in the calendar, and not by their "pagan" names.
5. A son and partner in Samuel Wood's publishing business.

Gary E. Wait is Head Catalogue Librarian at the Connecticut Historical Society in Hartford. He is President of the Connecticut Chapter of ABC.

de Grummond Children's Literature Collection Receives Grant

The de Grummond Children's Literature Collection of the University of Southern Mississippi is pleased to announce the receipt of a \$206,352 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. The 18-month project entails the archival processing of the papers of 150 women authors and illustrators who have had a significant impact on the changing nature of children's literature. In addition, the published books of these women will be cataloged. Dee Jones, curator of the de Grummond Collection, is the project director. Finding aids and cataloging records will be accessible through OCLC and the de Grummond Collection's web site (<http://www.lib.usm.edu/degrumm.html>).

Children's Book Reviews: The Inside Story

Susan Aller

At this spring's New England Conference of the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators (SCBWI) in Manchester, New Hampshire, one workshop examined the business of children's book reviews: who writes them, who reads them, and "who cares," in the irreverent words of the workshop leader, Susan A. Burgess.

Sue Burgess is a children's literature consultant, whose professional work includes reviewing professional books about children's literature, creating thematic reading lists, writing instructor manuals, and teaching children's literature at Framingham State College in Massachusetts.

With nearly 5,000 juvenile books published each year, it is impossible for libraries, schools, bookstores—and collectors—to choose which books to buy without referring to some kind of book review. Awards are often not made until late in a publication year, so the reviews in prestigious newspapers and journals play major roles in promoting early sales.

Why should collectors care? The main reason to buy a book early in its publication year is to assure finding a first edition; and it also may be easier to catch an author at a signing at that time. Later printings, editions with prize notations, paperback editions, etc. come in due time, of course.

Which publications should you consult? For sheer numbers of reviews, *The School Library Journal* can't be equalled: 3,700 books reviewed in one recent year, by 350 un-paid professionals, who sign their names, and whose audience is largely public and school libraries and library education schools. *The Horn Book Guide*, published twice a year since 1990, tries to review all published juveniles, using in-house and freelance reviewers. *Booklist* (2,700 reviews) and *The Horn Book* (c. 600 reviews) are consulted by school, public and academic libraries and teachers; and *Publishers Weekly* (1,700 reviews) targets book stores and publishers. All three use both in-house and

freelance reviewers. *The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books* evaluates about 750 books a year, with in-house reviewers.

Again, the question: why should collectors care? Because collectible gems are published every year, but most have extremely short "shelf life." Since the late 1980s, when the the Supreme Court ruled in the *Thor Power Tool Co.* decision that back-up inventory can be carried for only 18 months before being taxed as active inventory, the life of most children's books has become very short indeed! Publishers must sell out quickly or remainder their titles (some exceptions are made for educational presses). Only a precious few can survive to be reprinted for another time.

And we collectors—with our quirky needs for certain illustrators, certain subjects or certain formats—can no longer be certain of the staying power of our favorites. Ergo, the importance of reading the reviews!

Hot on the Trail of Peter Rabbit

Susan Aller

A chance to play with Beatrix Potter—how else can you possibly describe the fun of a hands-on preview of rare Potter items? Such was an evening in April when I went to Christie’s East to view the Doris Frohnsdorff collection and also had the pleasure of hearing a lecture on Potter by the British author and scholar Judy Taylor.

“Together with bears and elephants, rabbits have played a significant role in the literature of children,” Taylor began, listing the White, the Gray who was Winnie’s friend, the Velveteen, “Mr. Sendak’s Friend Rabbit” (Mr. Sendak was in the audience!) and the most famous and beloved of all: Peter Rabbit.

“A Skeleton in the Closet,” screamed a tabloid headline in Britain one year, when an over-eager journalist discovered that Beatrix Potter had used the skeletons of animals for her studies of painting. “She boiled Peter Rabbit,” the reporter continued. As a matter of fact, the real Peter Rabbit was the beloved pet of Potter for the nine long years he lived (having succeeded to that job when his predecessor, Benjamin Bounce, expired).

Potter’s earliest known art (c. 1874–76) is in the Linder Collection at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, and it already shows rabbits —“little men with rabbits’ heads” she called them. (At Christie’s sale, an 1878 watercolor sold for \$11,500, four times its estimate. Watercolor studies of flowers and berries also sold well above estimates.)

Taylor speculated that if a series of fungi paintings and a lecture that Potter submitted to a mycology society had been accepted, Potter might have focused on that subject and never have produced her series of children’s books. But her submission was rejected—quite possibly because she was a woman—and the world did not hear her work on mycology until 100 years later, when the paper was read in her honor at the society. (One of the 300 exquisitely detailed fungi paintings sold at the auction for \$12,000.)

After Potter married at the age of 47, she stopped writing children’s books. One

reason may have been her failing eyesight, and her stubborn refusal to install electricity in her house at Hilltop. It is a little known fact that Potter herself did the original “merchandising” of her books: she made the first Peter Rabbit doll and also designed the character wallpaper.

A question from the audience prompted Taylor to remark that Potter had left the copyright of her books to Frederick Warne & Co. And that prompted a spokeswoman in the front row to assure the audience that Warne uses much of the royalties to support the Beatrix Potter museum and other related projects in the Lake District.

In the intense competition at the auction the next day, “Peter Rabbit hopped to dizzying heights,” according to one paper. A total of \$700,000 was realized, far exceeding the estimates. A privately printed first edition *Peter Rabbit* sold for \$79,800 and *A Happy Pair* brought \$63,000. A collection of 200 photographs by Rupert Potter (Beatrix’s father) of Potter vacation spots, sold for \$5,750—and one can only hope that Warne bought them for the museum!

The Bloomsbury Review

Reviewed by Norman D. Stevens

The Bloomsbury Review Booklover's Guide: A collection of Tips, Techniques, Anecdotes, Controversies & Suggestions for the Home Library.

Written & edited by Patricia Jean Wagner. The Bloomsbury Review, 1996.
312. pp. \$12.95. ISBN 0-9631589-4-5 (paper).

While a few sophisticated book collectors may find this delightful booklover's guide to be too simple for their tastes, most book collectors, and certainly all would-be book collectors, will find it an inexpensive *vade-me-cum* as they pursue their hobby. It is a useful compendium, including an abundance of leads to other useful resources, dealing with the history of books and libraries, the book arts, the analysis and appraisal of book collections, acquisitions, collecting books, display and storage, cataloging and classification, repair, weeding, other libraries, electronic and on-line books, children and books, and the home archives. That listing of the chapter components suggest what a broad range of information will be found here. A typical chapter includes a list of organizations that deal with the particular topic under discussion, other relevant books, appropriate quotations inserted as sidebars, short statements from a variety of contributors on specific topics (*e.g.*, a neat statement by Peggy Noonan on the nature of the book contract between individuals who are lending each other their books), and Wagner's own chatty and judicious comments on the subject. Everything is written in an informal style that, at times, may make it appear that the work is uninformed but that is definitely not the case. Some users of this guide may want to pursue a specific topic (*e.g.*, book repair) in more depth, but the basic information that is provided is generally accurate and reliable and, in any case, cautions are offered and leads to resources that can help carry the reader further along are always provided. The brief section on when to use duct tape, which carries with it a bold-faced warning not to show it to the book conservation tribe with weak hearts, is a good example of Wagner's approach. She acknowledges the fact that fine book repairs must be designed to be reversible but

reminds us that if we have, for example, a furniture repair manual that receives heavy use in a shop, it is okay, in certain situations, to use duct tape or filament tape for practical and long-lasting repairs. The reader certainly comes away with a useful tip but also with a clear understanding that careful repairs to books are more often than not what is appropriate.

It is truly refreshing to find a guide of this kind that includes a specific chapter on children and books. That chapter is designed for “parents and other people who love children and who want to infect them with a passionate love for books.” It is, at the same time, of at least passing interest to the collector of children’s books. The seventeen pages can’t, of course, begin to do justice to a subject near and dear to the hearts of the ABCs but are a good start. The focus is primarily on giving books to children, storytelling, encouraging reading, and the like; the resources listed are all basic ones with which we are all familiar. That section only begins to suggest the depth that is to be found in children’s literature. It is the more broadly aimed suggestions contained in the rest of this charming guide that should appeal to almost all ABCs. At least look at it at your local public library to see if it is for you. Librarians should have bought it if only to have as a handy resource for readers who want to know what their family Bible is worth.

Non-Stop with Leonard Everett Fisher

Susan Aller

On a fine spring day a group of ABCs went to visit our old friend in Westport, CT, Leonard Everett Fisher. Poised for a move to a new studio, Fisher was apparently not missing a beat in his continuous production of art and text for the books that have brought him so much acclaim in the field of children's literature.

Current work? A book about Egyptian gods and goddesses, one about the Anasazi of the Southwest United States; one about Alexander Graham Bell, and another about the Tuoro Synagogue in Newport, RI.

"How in the world do you keep it all straight?" we ask. "My brain is like a camera," Fisher answers. "Images go in and never go out. I immediately geometricize the image in my mind—then when I draw, the images come out."

And come out they do, with an astonishing rapidity. Art, for Fisher is knowledge-based, not emotion-based; he studies, learns, analyzes, then creates. He does not sketch first, believing that this robs his work of spontaneity. He works rapidly on scratch boards or with paints, producing the finished piece in short order.

One book, to be published in the fall of 1997 by Marshall Cavendish, holds a special place in Fisher's affection. It is *Jetty Chronicles*, a semi-autobiographical account of his life between 1934 and 1939 when his family lived near Lower New York Bay. It has taken more than 18 years to write, and includes stories of people he met in the area around the jetty as well as an environmental history of the Bay. Fisher's passion for history pervades this story—as it does others. "I write history to alert the kids to dangers that are still out there in the world today."

The little boy who began drawing in a closet "studio" at the age of two is now in his seventh decade of artistic production, working with all his heart and mind and soul—and with joy undiminished!

A Tribute to Francelia Butler

Maurice Sendak

LIn the present turgid time of unnerving, politically correct books for children—of mind-numbing un-originality and bottom-line publishing at its worst—it is with great relief and joy that I think of Francelia Butler and her outrageously un-politically correct classes. The daring ebullience of Butler's mind—which celebrates the child—has that rare freedom, intellectual curiosity, and wildly unprejudiced and unpredictable quality of the wild child's mind.

In the brilliant constellation of people surrounding Francelia during my visits to Storrs, Connecticut, I pay personal homage to James Marshall, who best exemplified what Francelia firmly stands for: never condescending to the child, allowing for freshness—sometimes rudeness—of the child's genuine mind and heart.

Bravo, Francelia!

The tribute above was read by Michael Patrick Hearn on November 16, 1996, when Francelia Butler was honored at the dinner for participants in the Connecticut Book Fair. It is printed here by permission of Maurice Sendak, who graciously sent "Regards to all the gang in Storrs."

Guidelines for ABC Newsletter Submission

Although we accept typewritten manuscripts, someone on the newsletter staff must input the material into a computer word-processing program in order for the material to be usable by us. Consequently, it is greatly appreciated when submissions are made on a computer disk. Disks will be returned promptly, but please keep a backup of your file. They may be formatted for the PC or for the Macintosh. Any common word processing program that has word-wrap capabilities may be used. A printout of all submitted files should be included, as well as a note explaining what application was used. To make our job a little easier, please use one space only between sentences, and paragraph indents rather than extra lines between paragraphs.

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