

*Carroll Coleman on Printing:
Excerpts from a 36-Year Correspondence
with Emerson G. Wulling*

Selected by EMERSON G. WULLING

4 May, 1939

I haven't much of a place here, just a little one-man affair in a terrible state of disorder.

26 June, 1939

I am printing a tribute to Zona Gale by August Derleth. . . . I believe I told you I am to publish a little book of his this fall: "Atmosphere of Houses." A Wisconsin artist [Frank Utpatel] is going to do about a dozen woodcuts for the book.

25 September, 1939

The Derleth book is being held up until the artist finishes the woodcuts. It is all printed but the woodcuts and the second color. . . . Spent a couple of hours at the Art Institute in Chicago the other day with George Domke who teaches printing there and he got me all pepped up with the idea of a press at Iowa City.

3 February, 1941

It [*Oh Millersville!*] has had many fine reviews. The St. Paul *Dispatch* says Fern "already belongs to the ages."

4 June, 1941

I got out a second edition by photo-offset, not having time to reprint it by hand-set type and my small press. . . . I know of at least two instances where a first edition has already fetched the sum of five

[Editor's note: Carroll Coleman's Prairie Press was the subject of an essay and checklist in the November, 1965, issue of *Books at Iowa*. The editors are grateful to Mr. Coleman for granting permission to publish the present excerpts from his correspondence.]

dollars. I never thought to see the day when a Prairie Press book would increase in value with collectors! But of course it is because of the content, not the printing.

23 August, 1941

I thought the rules on the title-page [*Hue and Cry*] a trifle too heavy, but they were all that I had at hand. Three-point would have been better. No, I haven't acquired a mitering machine as yet, although I need one. I mitered the rules at the local newspaper.

13 September, 1941

The program I did recently for the Fortnightly Club was rather interesting. They wanted it to imitate their first one of fifty years ago as nearly as possible. I did my best with what I had to work with.

4 December, 1942

This [*Dinner Party*] may be the last book from this press, for the duration at least. I am finding it very difficult to sell copies of this book (poetry is hard enough to dispose of any time) and the business complications you feared are showing themselves in increasing numbers. Then, too, there is the ever present, but as yet unknown, knowledge that Uncle Sam may want me.

30 July, 1945

I am now in a new job, just starting it this fall [at The University of Iowa], and with some misgivings. However, it may work out all right. We have been given \$5000 from a private source to get this Typographic Laboratory under way. I will devote part of my time to it, and teaching typography as best I can, and part to the University Publications, in the direction of typographic supervision and re-designing. I am not too optimistic as to what can be done in this direction, until I can persuade them of the need of good and related type faces in the various shops doing the University printing, and of the proper way to get these type faces on paper. We have, of course, big ideas at the start. . . . P.S. Our initial type installation [in the Laboratory] will be Centaur, Garamond and Bulmer, with a little Goudy Text.

12 February, 1946

I now have part of the Prairie Press located here in Iowa City in a garage building (private) which I have lined with insulating board. It is somewhat hard to heat, and has a cement floor which keeps one's feet just above freezing. However, it doesn't make too bad a

shop. . . . I have started doing a little work again, in the time that I have. Have a 56-page book set in 12 point Centaur that I am printing for *Contemporary Poetry*, Baltimore.

Recently I acquired some Perpetua. . . . However, the 14 point doesn't seem to line too well, so I may have thrown my money away. Got it from the Los Angeles Type and Rule Company. They cast it from the English Monotype mats. I was intending to use it for a pamphlet I am printing for Alan Swallow, but don't know if it will look well enough.

20 February, 1946

Have one girl in my course this semester who has had some printing at Scripps College under Ward Ritchie. . . . Also have an assistant librarian doing graduate work who takes a keen interest in it. People like this make teaching fun. However, as you well know from experience, not all are so interested and there is much about that job that is far from fun. The work on publications is discouraging, to say the least.

26 February, 1946

Now to answer your questions as best I can: I was interested in printing from the first set of rubber type I owned, complete with tweezers and stamp pad, but the real impulse came when I took a course in printing in a school shop. Then I acquired a small hand press. This fed the desire. Reading the trade publications and studying the specimens reproduced gave me a desire to do better work. I was always a person with a great love for books. Having no library with typographic volumes at hand, I studied the better examples of bookmaking available in the local public library. I made fairly frequent trips to Chicago where I had the opportunity to examine fine printing in such places as the Newberry Library and at the apprentice training library at the Lakeside Press. The late William Kittredge was very kind to me at the Lakeside, giving me many specimens of fine printing produced there, and allowing me the run of the library. Miss Irma Goepfinger, the librarian and an Iowan, was also very helpful.

I do not think that Grant Wood and the Stone City group had any part in my plans, except as there was some reflection of the "regional" movement at that time, of which Grant Wood was a leading exponent. I thought it better to produce some original mid-western writing in limited editions (limited by available market rather than from any attempt to create rarities) instead of reprinting the same things most other private presses had done. I think that some day I may

be able to claim to be the only press that has not reprinted "Sonnets from the Portuguese." The private press movement interested me intensely.

I work from no special theories, except the desire to make the book as fitting to the purpose for which it is intended as possible. I think your estimate "an Attic austerity tempered with American vigor" a just appraisal. The ten generations of Yankees that preceded me would not permit me to print in the extravagant "California" style. I think I would like it if, as you say, a person might identify a Prairie Press book without seeing the imprint. That might indicate I have developed a style of my own, the possession of which is, I believe, a fine thing.

Although I like new type faces for the sake of variety, I find Bulmer my choice. It is an honest, hard-working face, legible, beautiful, and with a warmth such faces as Baskerville do not possess. The late 18th century English is undoubtedly my choice of periods, and the three B's thereof among my choice faces—Baskerville, Bell, and Bulmer. Updike is my American God; his "Printing Types" the one work no printer should be without. He has done more, I believe, to steer me away from the less desirable type faces, and show me, in his writing and in his use of them, the beauty of these finer letters.

2 March, 1946

. . . the general public is not aware of typography or fine printing beyond clean paper and clear type. I find the average person, although in contact with the printed word every day, has a knowledge of typography which can be encompassed by, "large print, fine print, Old English (applied to all black-face letters) and 'type which looks like writing.'"

7 March, 1946

My reasoning in placing them [shelf titles] thus is something like this: since when the book is on the shelf it is just about a toss-up as to whether one shall stand on one's head to the left and read them up, or stand on one's head to the right and read them down, that part of it doesn't seem to matter. If the book is lying on the table face up, the shelf title can be read if it reads down. If it reads up it will be upside down. So, to me, the vote goes to those reading down. Our English friends almost universally place them reading up.

19 March, 1946

I am starting work on an 80-page book of poems by Hugh MacDiarmid, *Speaking for Scotland*, which I am printing for Contemporary

Poetry, Baltimore. It will be set in Bulmer, which I think should be appropriate for such a book. That will be quite a bit of type to stick. There is a glossary of several pages in the back of the book. I may not have enough small italic for that and may have to have it set on the monotype in Caslon. It seems that no matter how much type one has, there is always a book that requires some extra sorts for something or other. . . .

Yes, sometimes the real students almost make up for the others, but some days it is a little hard to see even that compensation. I do not think I should like to make teaching a life work, although there are no doubt much worse things in the world. They have been very liberal with me here at Iowa, with my shortcomings as a teacher and in other ways. They have given me a free hand.

27 May, 1946

Have been having a devil of a lot of trouble with rollers in this new shop, now that I do not have heat in it. It has a cement floor on the ground, and it is very damp and the rollers get waterlogged until they won't take ink.

4 June, 1946

Wish I had a few hundred pounds of the English Caslon.

29 June, 1946

We had a two-day conference of industrial editors here this week, and that put me behind with everything. . . .

I tried the stunt with a fan at the ceiling last winter, blowing hot air down a large tube and out along the floor, and while it helps some, it doesn't make much impression on that cold slab.

10 September, 1946

In case you haven't seen it, you might be interested in Hall's "confession" in the September *Atlantic* [about *Oh Millersville!*].

31 March, 1947

I seem to have made one of my usual errors—that of taking on more work than I can get done when it should be done—and the result is I have been too rushed for the past few months. I finished a book today (56 pages, 1000 copies) and have two more in type that should be out within a month, but I can't possibly make it. One is 126 pages, 1000 copies, and the other 64 pages, 1250 copies. One I set in 10-point Bulmer, one in 12-point, and one in 12-point Garamond. If I can get out of this mess, I want to print a small edition, perhaps quarto size, in the Hammer American Uncial, the Book of Ecclesiastes.

It will be a break from my policy of printing original material (even when printing for others) but it is something I have wanted to do, and the Uncial seems particularly suited.

16 June, 1947

My Ecclesiastes is still in the planning stage. I am just finishing up the last of three books (printing jackets) and then have some small things to do and the type from all three to distribute. . . . I have had exhibits here this year of work from the late William Kittredge, from Philip Reed and from the Cummington Press, among other things. Have one of Victor Hammer's work scheduled for this fall. . . .

He [Wilbur Schramm] wants me to go to Illinois next year as designer for the University Press. I would want to know a good deal more about what I might expect before taking such a step. . . . George Stoddard, the new president, was here at Iowa for a good many years. He used to be a good customer of the Prairie Press. For the present I have a new title: consulting typographer to the University of Illinois. . . . At least, it is always pleasant to speculate about a new job, as it keeps the old one from getting dull.

I have taken on a job of free-lance book designing for a firm in Illinois. They are putting out a book on which they (and I) hope to do a good job. I spent last Monday with them. They are very cooperative, and have purchased fonts of 8 and 11 point Linotype Janson, especially for the book. Also some extra-thin space bands at my suggestion. I have a little trouble holding them down to something simple. Since it is a book on which they will "shoot the works" they think, as do many printers, they should load it down with ornamentation. I think they are disappointed with me in that respect.

29 November, 1947

I have a fondness for open-faced letters and have always admired and wished I had some of the Sylvan. I think it is extremely handsome for a line or lines with almost any good old style type. The Greco Adornado is one I have also liked in some places. . . . The Poliphilus is one of my favorites. I wish some of the characters were better fitted. I have a little 16-point Blado for which I am hoping to find a good use some day. Did I tell you that I purchased some of the Hammer American Uncial?

22 November, 1948

Work seems to increase both at the University and at my shop. I had hoped that by this time I might have a better place for my shop, but I am still in the old carriage house.

31 January, 1950

Recently I printed a book for the State Historical Society, a reprint of a rare early book on Iowa. . . . I hand set it in Bulmer and tried to give it some of the flavor of a century ago, and still make a modern book. The result is not very happy.

I'm hoping to get back before long to doing some publishing on my own. Have an anthology of poetry in type (except for a few pages of biographical notes) and this should be out in a few months. Also have under way an edition of Ecclesiastes in the Hammer Uncial, and a couple of other things projected. At the moment I'm looking over a book manuscript of August Derleth's poetry. . . .

I'd still like to get back to the Prairie Press on a full-time basis, but am now well along in my fifth year here. The work is very pleasant in many ways, but I feel I should be doing more printing before I am too old.

Just got in some Centaur yesterday. An enlargement of my font of 14 point, and some 60 point titling capitals which are very handsome. Now if I had some time to use them on something worthy of such a noble letter.

20 March, 1952

This book [*American Sampler*] and *The North Sea*, which I printed for New Directions, are both in the Fifty Books this year. Louis Untermeyer has some kind words about the printing of *The North Sea* in the current issue of the Saturday Review. . . .

Speaking of the STA [Society of Typographic Arts], there is a little sketch of the Prairie Press in a recent STA Bulletin. It was the first in a series on members. . . . My work schedule is very far behind.

16 June, 1952

. . . with the threat of glaucoma hanging over me. I have, of course, used my eyes too hard for the past twenty-five or thirty years, and it seems to have caught up with me. They get hard usage all day and evening, and, since I am a poor sleeper, I often wake and read for two or three hours at night. So the night reading must go, and I must cut down on their use in the evenings, which means a slower schedule at the Prairie Press at a time when I have more things under way than I have had for years.

20 June, 1953

. . . and the Prairie Press in its basement location.

23 January, 1955

On Thursday I went to Des Moines to talk to the Club of Printing House Craftsmen. They had asked me to do so, it being Printing Week, and I had given them a few subjects to choose from. They decided they would like to hear about "The Prairie Press: the First Twenty Years" which made it easier for me to prepare something—or rather to talk without preparation. It seemed to interest them, and they hung around for quite a while afterward looking over the books and pamphlets I had taken along.

If I ever work out of the publications on which I am now engaged, it is my plan to publish more on graphic arts subjects in the future. The Amerbach is yet to come (some type set) and I have accepted for publication a book of broad-pen, calligraphic drawings by Father Ned Catich, who does very fine work. I also plan a portfolio of wood-engravings by John De Pol, whose work you no doubt know, together with an essay on Mr. De Pol's work to be written by a former editor of *American Artist* magazine. Then Father Catich, who was a friend of Eric Gill, has written a little essay on Gill's thinking as an artist and craftsman which I plan to publish. There are one or two other items along this line that I have in mind doing. . . .

We have the beginnings of a small museum in connection with the Typographic Laboratory, having been given a Washington hand press and an old-time "paper plough," a predecessor of the lever paper cutter. Another old-time cutter is to come to us and we have numerous small items such as shooting sticks, composing rules. . . .

During the past year I was a member of a committee to prepare suggestions for a University Press. It seemed that most of the work eventually trickled down to me, so I prepared suggestions and a tentative budget (much above the suggestions of the committee as a whole) and these are now in the hands of the University administration. . . . It seems to me the key to success in such a venture is a capable, firm director, and such a man is hard to find.

The head of the Department of Publications (for which I work as you may recall, in addition to my work for the School of Journalism) retires on June 30th. They have suggested that I might take over the job, but I do want to try and see my way clear to doing some Prairie Press work. . . .

If I decide the new set-up is not for me, I may try to see if I can earn a living printing books for others and publishing a few myself. Failing that, I might add some more type faces and a precision proof press and see if I could make a living selling advertising composition as reproduction proofs. . . .

I have a book to do for the Caxton Club in Chicago for publica-

tion in the spring of 1956. . . . Paul Angle of the Chicago Historical Society is editing it and attaching a lot of notes. He has promised to have it ready by February. I hate to think how I can find time to do it, but I do appreciate the opportunity of doing a book for the Caxton Club. . . .

Bought a little Post Medium Titling from the Berthold foundry in Berlin recently. . . .

Do you have a little brochure "Poems from the Iowa Poetry Workshop" which I published a few years ago? I did it to give encouragement to the students and knew it would not sell many. Paul Engle, who runs the workshop, called me recently to say that the booklet was a large factor in obtaining a grant of \$40,000 for the workshop from the Rockefeller Foundation.

31 October, 1955

On last Wednesday evening I attended a dinner of the STA in Chicago at which Mr. Zapf spoke. Mr. Tracy, director of typographic development for the British Linotype company and Jackson Burke, director of typographic development for Mergenthaler, were also speakers. Had a chance to speak with Mr. Zapf at some length afterward and he is just as delightful as his types. I wish I had the money to buy a series of his Palatino. Have some Sapphire and have ordered some of his Sistina Titling capitals. . . .

The STA is having a showing of my work and has asked me to print some announcement cards.

1 January, 1956

. . . about the red on the STA announcement. It was made by adding brilliant red to Persian orange.

I've been making up pages and pulling proofs for four different books. I like to set type, but dislike presswork, as you may know. (Probably because I don't do it well—or perhaps I don't do it well because I dislike it.) . . .

J. J. Lankes has been wanting me to do a book of his wood-engravings of Pennsylvania Dutch barns. He has some beauties. I'm not sure just how well I could print them. Have a book of "Country Poems" by August Derleth scheduled for next fall for which he has done six wood-engravings.

16 December, 1956

I have been working a ten hour day and a seven day week in an effort to catch up on some Prairie Press work. . . . Have fifty galleys of Bulmer set, and much more to go besides presswork. . . .

I am taking the job as University Editor, Director of Publications, Manager of Mailing Service, and Manager of the University Printing Service with a good many reservations, and with doubts. President Hancher offered it to me a year and a half ago, and at that time I refused it. When approached again a year ago I had not changed my mind, but on the third conference about it in April, I decided to try it. . . .

When I left the Laboratory, Moeller wanted suggestions for a replacement and one of the men I suggested, and the one they hired, was Harry Duncan of the Cummington Press. He is a fine craftsman, and will, I am sure, do a good job.

16 March, 1957

[The Jackson monograph on Johann Amerbach]: I asked Don, a former student of mine, now editor at the University of Illinois Press, to do this several years ago. Just got it completed last fall, and have only now been able to print the sheet which accompanies the original leaf.

27 April, 1957

The new job is taking even more time than I had anticipated, but after a period of change and re-organization, things will run more smoothly and require less time. I think results can be seen, even after only four months, at least in the smoother operation of the University Printing Service. I can say this without loss of modesty, since it is mainly due to my new superintendent. . . . Next Monday I am taking about sixteen [shop people] to spend the evening with Father Catich at St. Ambrose College, Davenport.

14 October, 1957

The last few months have been hectic ones . . . trying to finish the book for the Caxton Club of Chicago. Finished the last item for it yesterday, the map. The book made 120 pages of hand-set ten and twelve point, 28 picas wide. Used a smooth paper and had to slip-sheet all of it. . . .

Things go along here, but not nearly as rapidly as I would like. No doubt I am too impatient. After twelve years you might think I'd be accustomed to institutional slowness and inertia.

29 January, 1958

In October I visited some University presses and had a chance to visit a couple of private presses, Joseph Graves at Lexington, Kentucky, and spent most of Sunday with Steve Watts and Mrs. Watts at their retirement home near Front Royal, Virginia. It was a wonderful

day with lots of type talk. Steve has a marvelous collection of specimen books. I'm going in with him on a subscription casting of 11 point Wayside on a 12 point body. . . .

The first year of the new job is completed, and while progress seems very slow, I guess we are making some headway.

8 July, 1959

I'm still looking for a subsidy or something. (With all of the money foundations are handing out nowadays, they might subsidize a printer, but I doubt it.)¹

21 March, 1960

Yes, I'm booked for the Book Arts Institute at the University of Minnesota on April 8 and 9. I approach this with a good deal of hesitation. I'm never a good speaker and they somehow talked me into two talks on the 8th. . . .

I still have the hope that some day I can return to the Press. At least I still continue to buy type, even though I have no time to use it. Just can't resist. Bought some Augustea and Augustea Inline recently.

9 May, 1961

I've finally made the decision to leave the University. The present job has some interest, but not enough. It pays well, and it takes a good deal of courage, or foolhardiness, to leave its security for the very considerable question mark of trying to earn a living with the Prairie Press. . . . I plan to try to make ends meet with publishing, printing some books for others (I hope) and trying to get some commissions to design books for other publishers. . . . It will be doing the things I most want to do. . . . I plan to take another direction in the books I publish, hoping to do more in the areas of typography, graphic arts, and some reprints of rare Americana.

18 July, 1961

I recently added some Joanna. I've always admired this face of Eric Gill's for its clarity, and think the compressed, inclined-roman italic is particularly delightful. It is available cast from English Monotype mats, from Los Angeles Type Founders, in sizes 10, 12 and 14 only. The trouble with their stuff is that they cast in Monotype metal only, and it does not stand up well. It is hard to beat ATF for accuracy and hard metal, but they do not have many of the more desirable faces.

¹ In the fall of 1967 the National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities did make grants to certain private presses, and the Prairie Press was one of these.

14 August, 1961

Years ago in Muscatine I had a couple of commission salesmen selling for me, but sales were very few.

6 December, 1961

Things are going on apace at the Press. . . . I'm just finishing a little pamphlet for the Davenport Times, a cash job to keep the grocery fund at a respectable level, and have a reprint to do for Herb West at Westholm Publications of the *Coronary Club*. This edition will be in hard covers. I'm setting it in Bulmer (12 point) with 11 point Wayside caps. I think it makes a pleasing variation, giving the Bulmer more of a Scotch look.

The University of Illinois Press is sending me Allan Nevins' new book, *The State Universities and Democracy*, to design. This will be a small book, and the third one I have designed for them. . . .

I'm also publishing a new edition of Fern Gravel's *Oh Millersville!* with the confession as it appeared in the *Atlantic* and some additional poems that Fern dictated to her secretary, James Norman Hall. . . .²

I had hoped to get away from much poetry publishing, as it is so unremunerative, but some good manuscripts are coming in, and it is difficult to turn them away. A very good one yesterday from Hayden Carruth, which I may publish. In my opinion Carruth is a real genius.

I don't know where I'll put it, in my crowded shop, but I have just bought about five or six hundred pounds of original Stempel Janson on Didot body. The italic above 10 pt. is cast on script body, a fine idea for strengthening the kerned letters. I got it at a bargain, and while it has been used quite a bit, most of it is in fair shape. It has quite a history, and I have been tracing it through various sources. It was bought by Henry E. Coe, Jr., who used it a bit at his private press, the Berryhill Press. Coe gave it to John Howard Benson who produced some books (and some of Benson's pupils did a book or two with it) at Benson's Berry Hill (two words) Press in Rhode Island. Father Catich of Davenport got it from Benson and brought it to Davenport from Rhode Island in his car (one 24-case cabinet with very full cases).

12 September, 1962

The next book will be the Klinefelter one of source materials of maps and plans for postage stamps. Out in about 2 weeks I hope.

1 December, 1964

I keep busy here, but find it difficult to make ends meet. I think per-

² This new edition of *Oh Millersville!* was apparently never published.

haps I'll have to abandon poetry entirely when my present backlog of manuscripts is processed. It seems to have a constantly waning audience, even though good, as I think quite a bit of what I publish is. I'm particularly enthusiastic about Hayden Carruth's *North Winter*.

[?] 1965

Did I tell you that I am now binding some books? I'm doing it in self-defense. I had had no previous experience, and my equipment is very primitive. . . . Anyway, two of the three books I printed and bound this past year have been chosen for the Fifty Books (the Jennings and the Gaucho book I did for West) so perhaps I am getting by.

Your conclusion that I am subsidizing my readers is quite correct. I *do* give discounts and I *do* pay royalties, so the picture is even worse than you had imagined. I'm having to cut my discount for single copies to 25% to dealers; it just costs too much to fill such orders. Anyway, most dealers order only when they have an order on hand, so they aren't risking anything. . . .

I've done two [design commissions] recently. One on "The Papers of William Hickling Prescott" for the University of Illinois Press, and one on "American State Archives" for the University of Chicago Press. I don't make any effort to get such work, but take what comes in. It is, of course, more profitable than the books I publish, considering the time spent, but I don't get as much satisfaction out of it.

25 May, 1965

I got myself into an almost impossible situation this spring with too much work, and a couple of unplanned and unwanted delays. Had a book set locally on the Intertype, and it was a mess. They set it on three different machines, did not correct on the same ones portions were set on, and the slugs were very inaccurate. I spent an extra ten days on the presswork, but the end result was frustration, for no matter how much make-ready time I put on it, it could not be made to look decent. I am ashamed to put it out, but guess I'll have to. It is a book on Shakespeare by Walter Hart Blumenthal.

28 December, 1965

Answering a question: I print the type and woodblocks separately in such a book as *Country Places*. I find I cannot use the same degree of inking for both. . . .

Pushing along to finish the Rowfant Club book I'm working on. . . . Not too pleased with the inking on this, and many other books I do. As I run during the day, the ink seems to get softer and I'm apt to get more on without realizing it. I suppose rollers get softer from friction

and the ink disc also gets warmer with friction. Then too, it is hard to hold the same color under artificial light on these dark winter afternoons. I must get some additional lights.

28 August, 1967

Have had a hard summer, with too much work, and very depressed this past week by the fact that the large elm that shaded our house all afternoon had to come down. I guess all elms will eventually go. We had had this and the other one sprayed faithfully a couple of times each year, but if there is diseased wood in the area, the beetles will carry the fungus. Depressed also by the cost of having it cut down—\$280.

15 February, 1970

Binding has become my major headache, and I just can't locate a satisfactory binder, and have been doing my own binding, but it is so time-consuming that it just doesn't leave me time for all of the other parts of bookmaking and book publishing. I haven't touched type for weeks; I've just finished binding 750 copies of a book I did for the Candlelight Press in New York, and I have yet to bind nearly 500 copies of the Derleth *Walden Pond*. I've had to keep at it too on binding of the Wendell Berry book of poems I published, as it has been selling very well—must have sold 800 copies to date, and orders still coming in at the rate of 10 to 20 a week.

29 July, 1971

[After a coronary attack June 14.] I'm making some progress. It will be some months before any operations at the Prairie Press can be resumed, and even then no more books will be published.

26 November, 1971

I seem to gain a little strength slowly, and do some walking each day when the weather permits.

10 December, 1972

I enclose a couple of specimens of E. L. Mayo's poetry—the volume now under way by fits and starts, mostly fits and pauses.

2 November, 1973

Yes, Bill Graf has sold quite a few Prairie Press items, and keeps advertising for them and picks up some from time to time. In fact, he has picked up quite a few; more than I would have thought were floating around. . . . Some time ago I heard from Herb West that he has sold

a copy of the first printing of *Oh Millersville!* for \$100. Of course this does not reflect any special value in the bookmaking; it would be because Hall was the author and that it had become a fairly famous hoax.

16 January, 1975

As soon as I can find some time, I'll go over the additions to the PP bibliography you have sent me and try to fill in the quantities, etc. My trouble (one of many) is that I am not a systematic recordkeeper, and hence may have to depend upon an increasingly faulty memory for such things as number of copies printed. And I'm not sure I can recall those books I designed for other publishers that were printed elsewhere. But I'll try.

As to the 50 Books: I believe it was some time in the early 60's that I ceased to send any for competition. The reason was that when I did receive a "call for books" it was usually too late to submit anything, and some years I did not receive any at all.

18 July, 1975

I've just had a note from Joseph Blumenthal, who now has the title of Bibliographical Associate at the Baker Library at Dartmouth (a nice job, if it pays well, as he works at his home in Connecticut). Says he gave away a lot of the Spiral Press stuff. Of course letterpress equipment is running out of printers' ears—I suppose there are 20,000 Linotypes around the country, not being used, and probably another 10 scrapped. A printer friend in Davenport bought a good Lino for \$100—lots of extras on it—and I suppose it cost him at least \$250 to get it moved and installed. I sold him my 8, 10 and 12 Baskerville with italic mats. Also sold him about \$400 worth of type, most of it never out of the package, types bought for commercial printing long ago. I find there is some demand for type, now that it is almost unobtainable, mostly from personal presses. Bill Holman called me from Austin wanting to buy my Weiss initials, now that Bauer has quit. Quit in New York, at least. John Anderson of the Pickering Press, who has type I've never seen any place else except in founders' specimens, says he was very close to Bauer and it almost made him cry to see all those nice, shiny new fonts going into metal barrels for the smelter. . . .

Got sidetracked on Blumenthal. He's doing a book on "The Printed Book in America Since 1640," and wanted a few hundred words on The Prairie Press and some of my ideas and objectives. . . .

P.S. Did I mention the Grolier Club wants a showing of PP books and ephemera January through April 1976?

THE PRAIRIE PRESS: A CHECKLIST, 1965-1975

Continuing That of L. O. Cheever in *Books at Iowa*, November, 1965

1965

147. COUNTRY PLACES, by August Derleth. With eight wood engravings by Frank Utpatel. 4¾ x 8¾, 46 p.; Bulmer and Fournier types, hand set; 350 copies on a specially made wove paper; decorated boards and cloth back; dust jacket in three colors including a wood engraving.
148. K, Carroll Coleman. 4½ x 7, 4 p.; Joanna type, hand set; blue, black, gold leaf rule; 160 copies on Curtis Rag; leaflet. *Printed for the Knopf Keepsake celebrating fifty years of publishing.*
149. OLD INDIANS AT CAPE CANAVERAL, by William J. Bryant. 6 x 9, 16 p.; Centaur type, hand set; black and red with a sketch in green; 500 copies on Strathmore laid and Curtis Tweedweave cover; wrapper. *Privately printed.*

1966

150. BAXTER'S PROCRUSTES, by Charles Waddell Chesnutt, with bibliographical sketch by John B. Nicholson, Jr. 6¾ x 8¾, 56 p.; original Stempel Janson, hand set, with American Uncial; black and red; 180 copies on mould-made paper from Holland; green linen cloth spine, with plum Dutch Charcoal paper sides with design printed at the Press. *Printed for the Rowfant Club, Cleveland.*
151. JOURNEY TO THE GOLD FIELDS, the diary of Zirkle D. Robinson, edited and with an introduction by Francis Coleman Rosenberger. 6 x 7¾, 26 p.; Bulmer type, hand set, and various types of the 19th century; gold-red and black; 580 copies on W&A tan Arak; decorated boards and cloth back; dust jacket in red and black.
152. THE ONLY PLACE WE LIVE, by August Derleth. With eight wood engravings by Frank Utpatel. 4¾ x 8¾, 48 p.; Bulmer type, hand set; black and red; 400 copies on a special wove paper; decorated boards and cloth back; dust jacket in red and black with a wood engraving.
153. THE ROWFANT CLUB YEARBOOK 1966. 4¾ x 7¾, 80 p.; Lino-type Times Roman and hand-set Bulmer; 203 copies on Curtis Rag; boards with charcoal-gray natural finish cloth for spine, orange-red for sides.
154. A STARRY NIGHT AT ARUÉ, by James Norman Hall. 6¾ x 5¾, 8 p.; American Uncial and Civilitéé types, hand set; red, blue,

[30]

and black; 510 copies on Hamilton's Victorian; sewn into Linweave Text wrapper.

1967

155. THE BENEFICIARY, by Ethan Ayer. 6 x 9¼, 46 p.; Garamond type, hand set; red, green, and black; 540 copies on Warren's Olde Style; cloth binding by the Prairie Press; dust jacket.
156. BY OWL LIGHT, by August Derleth. With six wood engravings by Frank Utpatel. 4¾ x 8¾, 43 p.; Joanna type, hand set; black and brown; 400 copies on Sonata paper; decorated boards and cloth back, bound by the Prairie Press; dust jacket in black and red.
157. POETS REMEMBERED, by Ralph Hodgson. 7 x 10, 71 p.; Bulmer type, hand set; black, brown, and green; 199 copies on a special wove paper; bound in Columbia Colonial Linen by the Prairie Press; deckle edge green dust jacket. *Printed for the Rowfant Club in its 75th anniversary year.*
158. THE ROWFANT CLUB YEARBOOK 1967. 4¾ x 7¾, 94 p.; Linotype Times Roman and hand-set Hadriano; 199 copies on Curtis Rag; boards with terra cotta cloth spine and blue-green patterned paper sides, with design printed at the Press.
159. SEASCAPE WITH FIGURES, by Gilean Douglas. 5¾ x 9, 32 p.; American Uncial and Garamond types, hand set; black and gray tint; 600 copies on Warren's Olde Style paper; cloth; dust jacket.
160. A SINGLE FOCUS, by James Hearst. 5¼ x 9, 74 p.; Bulmer type, hand set; black and red; 400 copies on Warren's Olde Style paper; cloth; dust jacket brown and green.

1968

161. NOTES FROM A BOOKMAN, by Herbert Faulkner West. 6 x 9, 96 p.; Bulmer type, hand set; black and red; 399 copies on Curtis Rag paper; decorated boards and cloth back, bound by the Prairie Press; dust jacket. *Numbered and signed.*
162. WALDEN POND, Homage to Thoreau, by August Derleth. With four wood engravings by Frank Utpatel. 4¾ x 7¾, 44 p.; Bulmer type, hand set; black and green; 750 copies on Basingwerk parchment; decorated boards and cloth back, bound at the Prairie Press; dust jacket in black and green. *The wood engravings have been printed direct from the blocks.*

1969

163. CAITLIN, poems by August Derleth. With nine wood engravings by August Derleth. 4¾ x 8¾, 50 p.; Joanna Type, hand set;

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black and red-brown; 400 copies on 1848 Traditional paper; decorated boards and cloth back, bound at the Prairie Press; dust jacket in black and green.

164. FINDINGS, poems by Wendell Berry. 5½ x 9, 63 p.; Centaur roman and Arrighi italic types, hand set; black and red; 1,250 copies on Warren's Olde Style paper; decorated boards and cloth back, bound at the Prairie Press; dust jacket in green and brown.

1970

165. THE CLAY HILL ANTHOLOGY, by Hayden Carruth. 5¾ x 4½, 156 p.; Garamond type, hand set; black and brown; 1,200 copies on Beckett 1848 Traditional paper; decorated boards and cloth back, bound at the Prairie Press; dust jacket in brown and green tint.
166. THE LANDSCAPE OF THE HEART, poems by August Derleth. With eight illustrations by Frank Utpatel. 4¾ x 8¾, 50 p.; Joanna type, hand set; 450 copies on 1848 Traditional paper; decorated boards with cloth back, bound at the Prairie Press; dust jacket in black and red.
167. PHRASE/PARAPHRASE, by Charles Guenther. 5¾ x 9, 69 p.; Garamond type, hand set; black and brown; about 400 copies on Warren's Olde Style and 200 on Ash White Arak; decorated boards and cloth back, bound at the Prairie Press; dust jacket in black and green tint.
168. THE PROGRAMME FOR TCHAIKOVSKY'S FIFTH SYMPHONY, a manuscript by Warren Geoffrey Kenfield, 6 x 8¾, 31 p.; Janson type, hand set; black, red, and blue; 400 copies on "Bibliophile Society" paper made in Holland; decorated boards and cloth back, bound at the Prairie Press; plain dust jacket. *Privately printed.*

1972

169. A FRAGMENT, by Thomas Hardy, from *A Few Crusted Characters*. 4¾ x 6¾, 12 p.; Garamond type, hand set; black and green; about 470 copies, including some for Gregor Affleck, on Ticonderoga laid, sewn into Winterstoke wrapper.

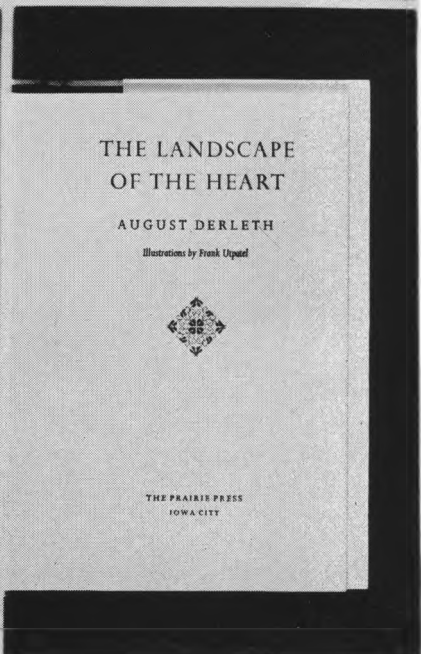
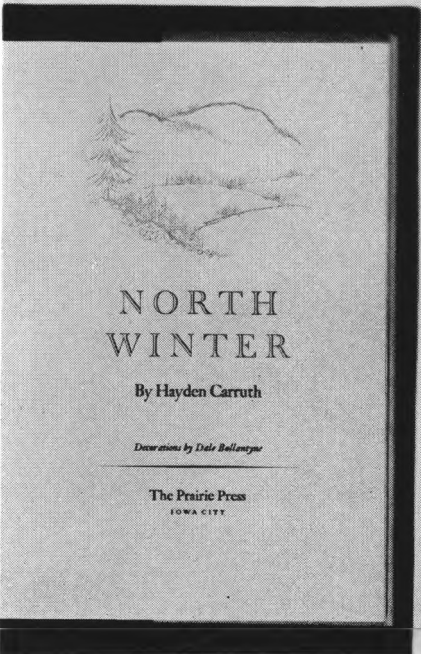
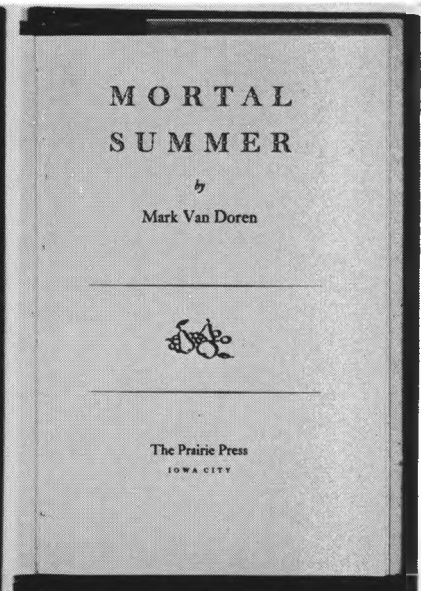
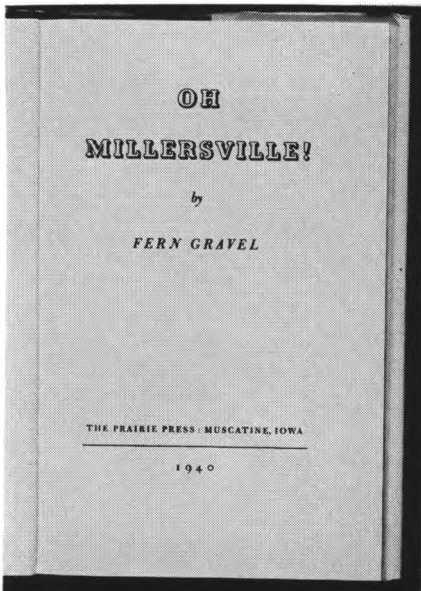
1973

170. A CHRISTMAS GARLAND, by H. P. Horne, Stephen Hawker, Isaac Watts, Nahum Tate, and Alfred Tennyson. 5¾ x 7¾, 12 p.; Poliphilus and Blado italic, hand set; about 470 copies, including some for Gregor Affleck, on Arak paper, sewn into Winterstoke cover.

171. SELECTED POEMS, by E. L. Mayo. 5¼ x 8¼, 124 p.; Bulmer type, hand set, with Janson italic and Hadriano Stone Cut; black and red; 650 copies on Beckett 1848 Traditional paper; decorated boards and cloth back, bound at the Prairie Press; dust jacket black and green.

ADDENDA

1944. YEARBOOK, WOMAN'S SOCIETY OF CHRISTIAN SERVICE. First Methodist Church, Oak Park, Ill. 4¾ x 5½, 48 p.; wrappers.
1945. A BUSINESS MAN LOOKS AT BOOKS AND LITERATURE, by Thomas Henry Foster. 6 x 9, 14 p.; Centaur type, hand set; russet and black; 350 copies on Linweave Text; wrapper. *An address delivered at the State University of Iowa.*
1961. THE PRACTICE OF TYPOGRAPHY, by Daniel Berkeley Updike, an excerpt. Broadside 9 x 13½, folded to eight pages, 4½ x 6¾; Eric Gill's Perpetua Titling and Joanna types, hand set; red, blue, and black; 600 copies on Ash White W&A Arak and 300 on heavy special Rose Text.
1967. A MEDITATION, by John Donne. 5% x 6½, 8 p.; Garamond and American Uncial types; hand set; black and red; 470 copies on Okawara paper hand-made in Japan and Winterstoke wrapper. *None for sale.* About 270 for the Colemans and 200 for Mr. and Mrs. Gregor Affleck.



Title pages from four decades of the Prairie Press: *Oh Millersville!* (1940); *Mortal Summer* (1953); *North Winter* (1964); and *The Landscape of the Heart* (1970).

On the Third Tower

I FOUND my freedom academic: on
The one hand The Tower of London stood,
And leaning gently over on the other
The Tower of Pisa; and their demonstration
Of gyves and odd weights falling equally
Carried conviction of Necessity.

Then what am I doing here?
What business have I on the Third Tower?
I don't recall clambering some back stair
Or being hoist by creaking windlass
Up this pharos, no philosopher
Reasoned me into it. I crouch here

Sparrow-small, cuffed at by wind, where cold
Punctilious stars patrol
Nightly, dull gulls by day.
The Tower shakes ceaselessly, and now again
The Old Man, flourishing his trident, howls
To the populous waves, his children:

Topple it once for all! O vertigo
And gap in nature, Freedom, I have come
To your Third Tower, revolving in my mind
The only beam of light that sailors find
On this bleak coast where spontaneity
Grinds in the last compulsion of the sea.

A page from a recent Prairie Press volume, *Selected Poems* by E. L. Mayo (1973). The type was hand set by Carroll Coleman, with Bulmer for the poems and Janson italic for the titles.

THE PRACTICE OF TYPOGRAPHY



APPARENTLY it was not so much conditions as personality and education that produced the fine books of early days. Typography was good then, and has been so under varying circumstances and at different periods, whenever it was practised patiently by educated men of trained taste who had convictions and the courage of them. When we think of a Jenson or an Aldine book, a Pickering or a Morris edition, a definite typographical vision passes before the eye. All the great printers had a conception of what they wanted to do. They did not permit themselves to be overwhelmed by trade conditions, by so-called practical considerations, by 'good business,' or the hundred and one excuses which printers make for being too ignorant, too unimaginative, or too cowardly to do what the older men did. Nor were they pulled about by ignorant customers who wanted first this type and then that; and by obliging whom the work would have become merely a series of compromises. If they had allowed what some standardless, uneducated printers today allow, no individuality would have been left in their books to be remembered! . . . The old times were not so very good, nor was human nature then so different, nor is the modern spirit particularly devilish. But it was, and is, hard to hold to a principle. The principles of the men of those times (since they require nothing whatever of us) seem simple and glorious. We do not dare to believe that we, too, can go and do likewise. . . . The practice of typography, if it be followed faithfully, is hard work—full of detail, full of petty restrictions, full of drudgery, and not greatly rewarded as men now count rewards. There are times when we need to bring to it all the history and art and feeling that we can to make it bearable. But in the light of history, and of art, and of knowledge and of man's achievement, it is as interesting a work as exists—a broad and humanizing employment which can indeed be followed merely as a trade, but which if perfected into an art, or even broadened into a profession, will perpetually open new horizons to our eyes and new opportunities to our hands.

DANIEL BERKELEY UPDIKE

A broadside designed, hand set, and printed by Carroll Coleman at the Prairie Press in 1961. The types are Eric Gill's Perpetua Titling capitals and Joanna.