

## Individual Collections

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MARGARET N. COUGHLAN

A COLLECTOR, ACCORDING TO the *Oxford English Dictionary*, is one who "collects or gathers together . . . scientific specimens, work of art, curiosities, etc." Who is the collector of children's books? What motivates her or him to search for shabby, often fragmented, often crudely illustrated chapbooks and small bound volumes from the past three hundred years when, in the eyes of the world, there are so many "worthwhile" items to collect? Is the collector of juveniles an individual on the verge of senility, of second childhood?

A casual glance at collectors and their occupations reveals that approaching senility appears to have little to do with their passion for early children's books. One collector, A.S.W. Rosenbach, was a scholar, writer, bibliographer, multilingualist, lover of fine books, and recipient of many honors. What made him devote his attention to children's books? An answer may be found in his introduction to *Early American Children's Books*: "Children's books have such a many-sided appeal that they are strangely satisfying. . . . Not only do they have as much scholarly and bibliographical interest as books in other fields, but more than any class of literature they reflect the minds of the generation that produced them. Hence no better guide to the history and development of any country can be found than in its juvenile literature."<sup>1</sup>

The good doctor, affectionately known as "Rosy," may have had the easiest entrance to the collecting of juveniles of any of the individuals described in this article. In the 1830s, Moses Pollock, Rosenbach's uncle,

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Margaret N. Coughlan is Reference Specialist in Children's Literature Center, Library of Congress.

served as a clerk for the Philadelphia publishing firm, McCarthy and Davis. During the 1820s, this firm acquired Johnson and Warner, a house which had been publishing children's literature since the 1780s. As part of the deal, McCarthy and Davis received a large lot of children's books, the sorting and arranging of which was the responsibility of Moses Pollock. He became so interested in these books that he began to acquire them, as he eventually did the business of McCarthy and Davis. In 1900 he gave his collection to his nephew after adding "some extremely valuable examples of early Americana juvenilia," including *Legacy for Children*, published in 1717 by Andrew Bradford of Philadelphia.<sup>2</sup>

This new hobby, the acquisition of early American juveniles, took Rosenbach on many exciting chases. Pointing out that it is a miracle that any child's book survives the natural destructiveness of its owner, he speaks with relish of the joy of finding them, particularly since many are unique. The collection he gathered contains choice items ranging from *The Rule of the New-Creature* (1682) to such desirable volumes as *Peter Piper's Practical Principles of Plain and Perfect Pronunciation* (1836). The richness of his collection can be ascertained by examining *Early American Children's Books*, a handsome, illustrated volume Rosenbach prepared to encourage others to collect these relics of America's childhood. The collection is now housed in the Free Library of Philadelphia.

Another well-known collector was d'Alté Welch. By profession a biological scientist on the faculty of John Carroll University in Cleveland, Welch chanced upon his avocation when he was sixteen years old. At that time his father told him the story of the origin of "Little Jack Horner." Young Welch was so intrigued that he went to the New York Public Library, researched and wrote a paper entitled "Old Mother Goose." It was there that he met Leonore St. John Power, head of the Children's Room, who captured his imagination with early children's books. From that time on he was a victim of what Wilbur Macey Stone has described as "the dreadful disease."<sup>3</sup> Friends, among them Marcus McCorison of the American Antiquarian Society (Worcester, Mass.) and Ruth E. Adomeit, still speak of Welch's charm, enthusiasm, whirlwind manner, and boundless delight in the tiny volumes from America's past.

Welch keenly felt the lack of a guide to collecting children's books — one that would reveal which books were common and which unique — and for this reason he embarked on what was to become his life's work: compilation of *A Bibliography of American Children's Books Printed Prior to 1821*. In it he identified as many of the editions as possible of "narrative books written in English, designed for children under fifteen years of

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age,"<sup>4</sup> and printed before 1821. Omitted from the bibliography are books written by or about children, treatises on the rearing and education of children (with the exception of some etiquette books), school books, sermons and books of advice. Welch's personal collection, considered by scholars to be of major importance, is now housed in two libraries; the English imprints are at the University of California at Los Angeles, and the American ones (along with all Welch's notes, films and photocopies of American children's books) are in the American Antiquarian Society Library. Among the rarities are twenty-eight miniature Bibles, a unique *Robinson Crusoe* (ca. 1792), fourteen editions of *The History of Holy Jesus*, imperfect copies of Charles Perrault's *Fairy Tales or Histories of Past Times* (1794), *A History of Goody Two-Shoes* (1774), *Tom Thumb's Play Book* (Worcester, 1794), and over 100 volumes which are either unique, one of two known copies, or the best known copy of a given work. His bibliography, with its excellent introduction, history of early literature for American children, and recording of editions, is an invaluable guide to American publishing for the young. For documentation of all English editions, scholars have the bibliography as it first appeared in the *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*.<sup>5</sup>

A third collector, heiress Elisabeth Ball of Muncie, Ind., has been described by William Targ as "one of America's noted bibliophiles and collectors of early juvenilia."<sup>6</sup> When asked how she became interested in early children's books, Ball replied that her father, industrialist George Ball, had collected books since he was eighteen. Upon learning about the influence of a book read in childhood on an author, her father would attempt to find that particular book; these searches sparked his interest in collecting juveniles. As a child, Elisabeth Ball collected the works of popular and current illustrators such as Arthur Rackham, Edmund Dulac and Kate Greenaway. Both she and her father enjoyed the books "for the way they presented 'the world and its marvels' to children." After a while, dealers began contacting George Ball when they found items of interest. He purchased a small collection of early children's books from a Cleveland dealer and then part of the famous Gumuchian collection. One evening, while she and her father were putting the books away after showing them to guests, he told her, "I think you had better consider these your books." "That," she adds, "is the way he gave them to me."<sup>7</sup> This collection of masterpieces from the past, described as "magnificent" by Welch, is no longer intact. The hornbooks have gone to the Free Library of Philadelphia, and the largest portion is now in the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York.

In an interview for *The Muncie Star* on the opening of the Pierpont Morgan Library's exhibition "Early Children's Books and Their Illustration," director Charles Ryskamp noted that a large number of the items were gifts of Elisabeth Ball, and praised her determination and unerring sense of detection in acquiring—in fine condition—rarities from the earliest known alphabet sheets of 1544, through the 1827 *Whittington and His Cat*, to the early editions of *Robinson Crusoe*. According to Gerald Gottlieb, curator of the library's children's books, the breadth and variety of the collection make it quite likely the finest in the world.<sup>8</sup>

During a telephone conversation with the same interviewer, Ball remarked that while she was "still in [her] right mind and able to see what should be done," she decided that the books ought to go where they could be seen and used. She thought of the Morgan library, although at first its curators were not too interested. However, after two men from the library went to Muncie and spent a week examining the books, they became interested. Thus, in 1964 the collection (with a fund for maintenance and further acquisition) was transferred from Muncie to New York.<sup>9</sup> Many of the collection's choice items are included in the library's exhibition catalog, "Early Children's Books and Their Illustration."

Ruth E. Adomeit of Cleveland, former schoolteacher, secretary and researcher at Western Reserve University, recalls in a letter that she succumbed to the "incurable disease" during the summer she was ten and found in Cape Cod antique shops two "treasures" of absolutely no intrinsic value. The first was a thin chapbook, 4 inches tall, with the title *Father Shall Never Whip Me Again*. The book's title tickled her fancy, as did its size. Her second treasure of the summer was a tiny wooden book, little more than an inch tall. The dealer, seeing her delight, gave it to her. She writes: "How often I wished it were a real book that size, but I *knew* that no one could make a book that small. How wrong I was!"<sup>10</sup>

The following year she came across *The Little Pilgrim's Progress*, printed in 1848. The book was only 3 inches tall, the smallest she had ever seen, and she felt she had to own it. When she timidly asked the dealer the cost, he shook his head and told her it was not for sale. Tears came to her eyes. Then he smiled at her and said, "But I am going to give it to you. It belonged to my grandfather and I have no one to leave it to. I know you will take good care of it." She was so overcome that she could not even thank him properly. That was when she began to dream of a library of miniature books.<sup>11</sup>

While she was in college, her father, a well-known printer, painter and director of Caxton Co., gave her her first real miniature book, which

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he had received from the American Institute of Graphic Arts. Entitled *The Addresses of Lincoln*, printed and bound by Kingsport Press (Tenn.), it was only  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch tall. He later sent her *Coolidge's Autobiography*, a matching volume. About ten years later she was able to secure a copy of a third book, *Washington's Farewell Address*. A collector of books and manuscripts, Otto Ege of Cleveland, Ohio, showed her a catalog from England which offered a collection of fifteen miniature books. Despite the depression — the price of the collection was more than a month's salary — she cabled for the books. From that time she began to read catalogs — “a symptom of the collecting disease, and once you find that catalogs are more interesting than best-sellers, you are lost.”<sup>12</sup>

A fourth antique dealer initiated her to what has since become her special quest. She was hunting for early juveniles in a trunk of books when she discovered a shoebox full of tiny books, many of them thumb Bibles. They were old and shabby, and many were incomplete, she recalls, but they had been read and loved, and to her were the most charming books she had ever seen. She has collected miniature books and especially thumb Bibles ever since.<sup>13</sup>

Since the untimely death of her good friend d'Alté Welch, Adomeit says that she has not collected the “larger” juveniles as ardently as she had while he was alive, for “half the fun of collecting juveniles was to find rarities to tantalize him.” The two had met through their collecting of tiny Bibles, had traded, compared books, envied each other's finds, and shared their discoveries.<sup>14</sup>

She attributes much of her love of books to her father. One of her greatest pleasures as a child was to spend a day at his office, handling his books on fine printing. Her father, she says, was uncompromising about printing: it had to be done beautifully. “I think he was about the first person to win an award — for printing one of the Fifty Books of the Year — for a textbook, before they had such a category.”<sup>15</sup>

Today she has a “minicollection” containing more than 2000 books less than  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches tall, 2000-3000 “folios” from  $2\frac{1}{2}$  to  $3\frac{1}{2}$  inches tall which are not juveniles, and a collection of thumb Bibles spanning three centuries, the “culmination” of all her collecting. She is preparing a checklist of these for publication. Her collection will go to the Wellesley College Library, where it will be cared for and kept intact.<sup>16</sup>

Frederick Gardner of Amityville, N.Y., was not a book lover as a child. He remembers in his youth in post-World War I Germany being “absolutely hostile to books and the printed word.” However, six years of service with the Royal Air Force as an English instructor to non-British

enlistees introduced him to English literature. During this time he "made peace with the book."<sup>17</sup>

Gardner came to the United States in 1947, and in 1948 joined three cousins in their book jobbing business in Scranton, Penn., until the firm was incorporated in 1966 by the International Textbook Company. This intimate contact with books, "albeit as merchandise," helped change his outlook. However, until he visited Samuel Johnson's house and Hall's Bookshop in London in the early 1950s, book collecting was far from his thoughts. He "caught fire" reading the story of the Malahide Papers, the various biographies and works of Samuel Johnson, such as *The History of Rasselas* and *A Dictionary of the English Language*. Without realizing it, he became a Johnson collector and reader of eighteenth-century literature. But, he adds, collecting Johnson or his contemporaries was rather like cultivating "a taste for champagne on a beer income."<sup>18</sup>

After moving to Amityville he sought original artwork by illustrators of children's books for the walls of an exhibit room for librarians. He wrote to fifteen Caldecott Medal-winners and other artists requesting artwork. A letter sent to Robert Lawson was answered by a lawyer since Lawson had died the previous month. A friendship with Lawson's heirs developed, and over the years he acquired the greater part of the illustrator's work and ephemera which has since been donated to the Free Library of Philadelphia.<sup>19</sup>

In the 1960s Gardner too succumbed to that "dreadful disease" of children's book collecting and today he has assembled what he calls "all-important milestones in children's literature, from the worst to the best." He now reads children's books with great interest, selecting as collector's items those he considers important or likely to become so. Although he has no children, the subject of childhood intrigues him and thus he also reads books about childhood and child psychology, relating them to "the various elements in children's literature as they evolved, were twisted and often discarded over the years." Perhaps his greatest fascination is with "the reaction of the adult to childhood — as a book buyer, what would sell? Will the pendulum swing back from extreme permissiveness to Victorian repression?"<sup>20</sup>

He treasures the dedications found in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century juveniles for their reflection of "adult striving and the child's reactions to it when following the events of a period." Also cherished are inscriptions — particularly invectives heaped upon the book thief written by the book's young owner — and marginal notes found in sixteenth-century textbooks; these make books seem attractive and lived with. Gardner

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finds absorbing the problem of identifying incomplete or well-worn books.<sup>21</sup>

The research he undertook for his introduction to the Garland Press facsimile reprint of the 2-volume Stockdale edition of *Campe's New Robinson Crusoe* firmly anchored his interest in eighteenth-century juveniles. Not only are they rare, but also small, and thus contravene the collector's nemesis — lack of space. Regarding collection themes, Gardner wrote:

If I were to start over again, I would probably start a collection of editions of Aesop and other fabulists. Material, except fifteenth- and some sixteenth-century, is still plentiful. Illustrations abound in various degrees of quality and, of course, price. One of my possessions is a 1501 Aesop, unfortunately incomplete, with 194 exquisite woodcuts. I believe that almost every illustrator or woodcutter before 1750 has done at least one Aesop (or La Fontaine) and prices are still within reach of the average collector.<sup>22</sup>

The entire Gardner collection will be donated to the Free Library of Philadelphia. Gardner selected that library as depository for three reasons: (1) his long-standing friendship with former director Emerson Greenaway, Greenaway's successors, and the staff in the Rare Book Department; (2) the agreement with the city that the library will publish, within five years after receiving the books, a catalog listing his holdings along with their other collections; and (3) the library's proven ability and willingness to care for such a collection.<sup>23</sup>

Childhood, as reflected in poetry, captivated another collector, John Mackay Shaw. In an article for *Top of the News*, he wrote that like many fathers, he composed verses for his children. After his children outgrew his efforts, Shaw wondered how many popular poets had also written poetry for their own children. He discovered that this was a common occurrence and began seeking "a complete delineation of the poetry for or about children, of the poems that children had read, loved, and been influenced by, and of the books and periodicals in which such poems had been printed." Since he could find none, he decided to make one himself. He haunted old bookshops, collecting not only such obvious works as those by Isaac Watts, Jane and Ann Taylor, Eugene Field, Robert Louis Stevenson, A.A. Milne, and Edward Lear, but also those by poets who had written about childhood — William Wordsworth, Alfred Lord Tennyson, William Shakespeare, Ogden Nash and others. He did not neglect poets read by adults whose verses children had loved and adopted as their own, or such writers of prose whose texts contained poetry, e.g., George MacDon-

ald, J.R.R. Tolkien, Lewis Carroll, Walter de la Mare, and Kenneth Grahame. He acquired as by-products a number of interesting letters and other original writings, including a letter by Arthur Rackham that may well have been the last one he wrote. He discovered such a rich field in nineteenth-century magazines, including *St. Nicholas* and *Our Young Folks*, that he was prompted to index poems, poets and illustrators found in juvenile periodicals. This was the forerunner to his work *Childhood in Poetry*, which includes a keyword index to 100,000 poems.<sup>24</sup>

Like other collectors, Shaw became concerned about the disposition of his collection. He began collecting in the early 1930s and by the late 1950s had acquired more than 5000 books. On retirement he visited several educational institutions and selected Florida State University (Tallahassee) "on the condition that they would take the donor with the gift."<sup>25</sup> He has since received an honorary doctorate from that institution and is today busily adding to the original five volumes of his catalog, *Childhood in Poetry*, which he hopes will provide "a microscopic window through which the books might be seen more clearly by their potential users."<sup>26</sup>

Ludwig Ries became a serious collector of children's books following a chance visit to a secondhand bookshop in Toronto and a meeting with Judith St. John, curator of the Osborne collection in the Toronto Public Library. Specializing in early editions, and finely printed and illustrated volumes published prior to 1900, Ries described some of his most unusual finds in an article for *Top of the News*: a French book published in Detroit in 1811 entitled *Perfectionner l'éducation de la jeunesse* by Augustin Alletz, and perhaps the only perfect copy of Elizabeth Turner's *The Daisy* (Philadelphia, 1808). His collection is rich in McLoughlins, fables, editions of *Robinson Crusoe*, alphabets, and books illustrated by George Cruikshank, Thomas Bewick, Alexander Anderson (Bewick's American imitator), and others. There are also a number of unique copies. Ries compiled title and author (when known) card files for his more than 2500 volumes, along with a list of publishers. For him, collecting children's books had a many-faceted attraction: they reveal a period's fashions, lifestyle, psychology and pedagogy, and possess charm and quality. He concluded his article with the remark: "It is a proud feeling to be establishing a collection that will be studied and appreciated."<sup>27</sup> After his death, his wife Vera continued to add to the collection which, like Gardner's, has gone to the Free Library of Philadelphia.

A book lover and avid reader from childhood, Linda Lapidés of the Enoch Pratt Free Library (Baltimore) reports that she began by collecting contemporary children's books both because her parents were "art aficion-

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ados" and because of the late Irvin Kerlan. However, a chance encounter with Ries, followed by a visit to see his collection, made her "a confirmed collector" of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century juveniles.<sup>28</sup>

Although she still collects the works of certain contemporary authors and illustrators, she now seeks chapbooks published by the Babcocks, Solomon King and Mahlon Day; toy books published by the McLoughlins and others; movable and pop-up books; and Maryland imprints. She also has a number of English juveniles. Her favorites include *The Infant's Library* (London, John Martin, 1800s); an American Sunday-School Union publication, *Country Sights for City Eyes* (1840s), with lithographs by Augustus Kollner; and *The History of Billy Hog and His Wife* (London, 1816). A recent acquisition is a thumb Bible (1813) taken by a friend from her young daughter's doll house, where it had been serving as a table.<sup>29</sup>

Lapides and her husband are intrigued by the books for their revelation of the history and development of publishing, printing, binding, and illustration, as well as by their contents, which clearly reflect the attitudes and values of the period in which they were written. The collection, to be described in a forthcoming issue of *Maryland Magazine*, is available for examination by scholars on written request.<sup>30</sup>

Ruth Baldwin's "great adventure of developing a library of nineteenth-century children's books in English" was initiated by the birthday gift of a handful of chapbooks sent to her from England by her parents. "Quantities" rather than rarities, books children have actually read and loved, are of concern to Baldwin, professor emerita of Louisiana State University. She has sought "the unknown and forgotten book rather than the classic, the common edition rather than the limited one." By the time she retired in 1977, she had amassed during a quarter-century a library of more than 35,000 children's books published prior to 1900. It is nearly equally divided between English and American titles.<sup>31</sup>

A gift from her father, also a distinguished collector, enabled Baldwin to acquire one of the collections of the well-known bibliophile, Benjamin Tighe of Massachusetts. This purchase has doubled her holdings of juvenilia published before 1821, which now number 730 items, "possibly making it the second largest in existence."<sup>32</sup> Parallels — English and American editions of the same title — are perhaps the greatest strength of her library, which contains dozens of different editions of *Pilgrim's Progress*, *Robinson Crusoe*, Aesop's *Fables*, Thomas Day's *Sanford and Merton*, Hans Christian Andersen's *Fairy Tales*, *Fairy Tales* by the Brothers Grimm, as well as works by Jacob Abbott, Maria Edgeworth and many others. Also represented are "hundreds of boys' books, girls' stories, chil-

dren's tracts, toy books, long runs of many magazines, and many alphabets."<sup>33</sup> An indication of the variety of alphabet books in her collection is given in her *100 Nineteenth-Century Rhyming Alphabets in English*.<sup>34</sup>

On retirement, Baldwin became curator of a historical children's library and professor at University of Florida (Gainesville). Her collection will be housed in the university library. With "extremely generous support from the university," she is devoting her time to adding to her pre-1900 holdings, acquiring twentieth-century materials, and preparing a card catalog for the pre-1900 titles which she hopes to publish in 1979. Because of its magnitude, its value to scholarship will be immense; it will provide editor, translator and illustrator information, as well as identification of authors of anonymous works. When the library is ready for use, it will provide access to more than two centuries of children's books, "many of which have never been available in libraries before."<sup>35</sup>

Interest in toys links the last two collectors to be discussed in this article. Mrs. William Waldron of Longwood, Penn., says that her delight in toys and illustrated books arose from a childhood love of paper dolls. As a child she lacked toys because her family was poor, but she did have paper dolls. Her collection of juvenilia is varied, including various kinds of paper dolls, some taken from *Godey's Lady's Book* (ca. 1850); a nineteenth-century paper doll, "The Protean Figure of Metamorphic Costumes" (S. and J. Fuller, 1811); paper soldiers; and sheets of dolls from twentieth-century women's magazines, as well as toy books, peep-show books, panoramas and books by such noted illustrators as Walter Crane, Randolph Caldecott, Kate Greenaway, and Beatrix Potter. Her oldest book is a volume of fables in rhyme, printed in England in 1788. The quality of printing and art found in the publications of the American Sunday-School Union intrigued her and led her to acquire a representative group of those published between 1825 and 1860. She has also collected paper dolls and books issued by McLoughlin Bros., nineteenth- and early twentieth-century pioneer in the publishing of inexpensive, full-color children's books; Palmer Cox Brownie figures and stamps; and items such as doll furniture, games, toys, valentines, a miniature village, dairy yard, theater, and a stereopticon with original plates. This wide variety of juvenile amusements reveals the social and educational activities of the young as well as the world of fashion. She selected the Henry Francis Du Pont Winterthur Museum (Winterthur, Del.) as the depository for her collection because of the museum's concern with social history, and her collection certainly adds dimension to any study of nineteenth-century family life.<sup>36</sup>

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George M. Fox of Shelburne Falls, Mass., was once an employee of Milton Bradley Co., a toy and games firm which acquired McLoughlin Bros. Since 1926, Fox has concentrated on gathering hand-colored books printed in the United States and Great Britain, and finely printed children's books from the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. His collection of 2100 items contains such riches as more than 300 volumes printed between 1790 and 1850; more than 300 McLoughlins (1860-1890, including early works illustrated by Kate Greenaway and Thomas Nast); large numbers of picture toy books and mechanical (or transformation) books, issued by Dean & Co. and Read & Co., both of London; and various editions of such childhood classics as *Mother Goose*, *Puss 'n' Boots*, *Cock Robin's Courtship*, *Goody Two-Shoes*, and *A Good Boy* (1837). In January 1978, Fox donated the collection to the San Francisco Public Library for two reasons: his great affection for the city and the suggestion made by his son, a rare book collector, that the children's books would fill lacunas in that library's Grabhorn Collection on the History of Printing.<sup>37</sup>

Scholar, scientist, heiress, teacher, researcher, businessman, librarian — there is no typical collector of juvenile materials, and there is no evidence that any of these collectors owe their avocation to leanings toward senility. Each man or woman has shared a passion for children's books and a keen sense of the importance of these childhood relics to the study of the art of illustration, printing and a country's past. Perhaps their choice of great libraries as depositories for their collections reveals most eloquently their common concern that these treasures be cared for and put to the service of scholars.

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