

IDAHO CENTER FOR THE BOOK NEWSLETTER

"...because people read t-shirts."

VOL. 2/NO. 2
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(Book Design & Idaho Presses)



ICB version of
"Pavlov's Trout" t-shirt illustration (watercolor)
Copyright ©1993 by Eileen Klatt of Hope, Idaho, from cover art for
Pavlov's Trout The Incomplete Psychology of Everyday Fishing
by Paul Quinnett (Sandpoint, ID: Keokee Publishing, 1994)
T-shirt courtesy Laurel Wagers

DESIGNING LIGHT

Book design has many meanings. There are artist books, literary books, informative books, coffee table books, slick expensive books, publishing house books, bestsellers, and so on. The book I have been working on, *A Light in the Window of Idaho: Boise's Public Library 1895-1995*, a book to commemorate the library's centennial anniversary, is low budget, non-profit, historical, informational, commemorative, and will be, I hope, attractive. My role in this scenario was to make this specialized book a physical reality. As it turned out, I had agreed to design a book that was not yet written. Regardless, I also took it upon myself to go beyond where I had gone before with the technical aspects of the design.

My first challenge was to come up with a size and format and other specifications for the book. It had to be both affordable and designable. Budget dictated some of the variables, such as the number of ink colors and type of cover. I knew, however, that I could produce a distinctive look with only two or three colors. I hoped to attract some attention to the book by adding visual interest.

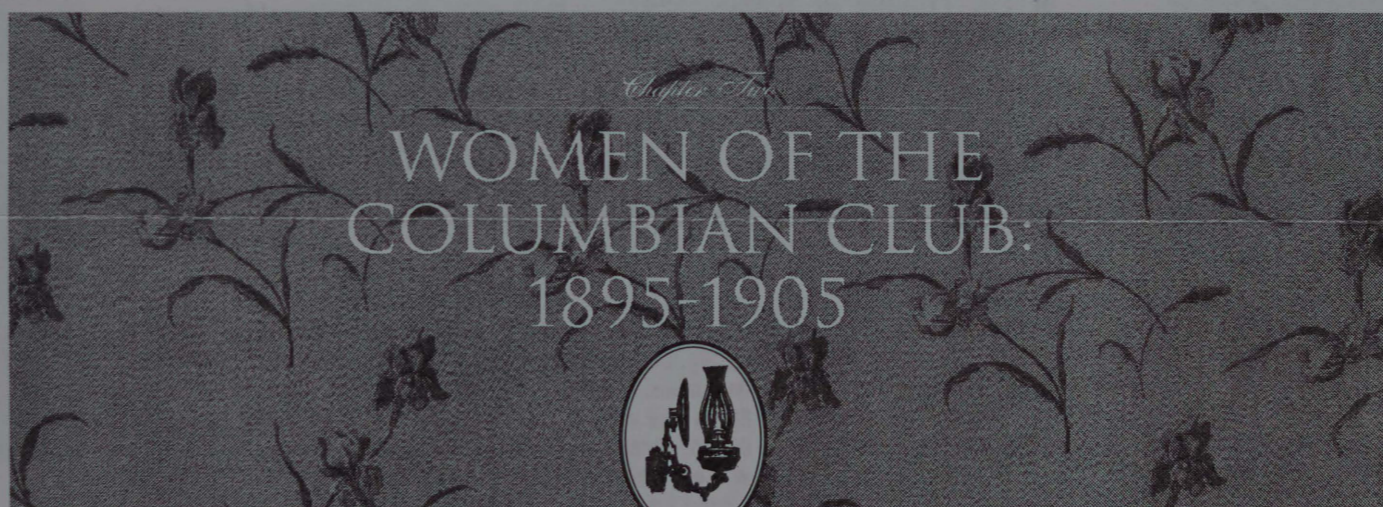
Prime considerations for design were to evoke an historical feeling and for photos to print as clearly as possible. A wide range of reproduction quality existed among the originals, which came from various historical archives and collections around the state. Fortunately, computer programs available make it possible to improve the quality of even the worst

newsprint and photocopies. I chose a coated cream colored paper with a matte finish and an off-black, brownish ink for the main text and green and gold for the complementary colors, primarily because they were the colors of the Columbian Club, the library's founders. The next challenge was taking the odds and ends of available photos and not only fitting them with the text, but making the entire flow of the book rhythmic, uniform, pleasing, and easy to read. For visual texture and richness, and to add

atmosphere, I thought the backgrounds of different fabrics from each time period covered in the book would be unique and appropriate. An icon was needed for the book, and I decided to add one for each chapter as well. Recalling the title of the book, I decided that light fixtures from each time period would work well as chapter icons.

One element that is often overlooked in the undertaking and crediting of a project is research. Although I didn't participate in the extensive research that was conducted in the writing of the book, I had to hunt down the authentic period fabrics that were to be used as backgrounds, and reference material for my illustrations of light fixtures. The Idaho Historical Society was very helpful in pointing me in the right directions. I was given access to their collection of hardware catalogs from the early 1900's where I found the lamps I was looking for. For the fabrics, I was sent to Barbara Edney, a member of The Society for the Preservation of Fashion and Textiles in Boise. She generously provided the editor and myself with a tour of her personal collection of vintage fabrics and textiles, and offered her expertise on what would be accurate examples of fabric for each period. She lent us the fabrics which I had scanned in black and white and different combinations of the three ink colors were applied in PhotoShop as duotones. Artist Trina Olson donated the use of some of her hand made paper for background texture where the fabrics were too busy.

Emmy McGowan
Way Beyond Design, Boise



By Suzanne Sermxn

BOISE'S FIRST PERMANENT, GENERAL-PURPOSE LIBRARY opened its doors in 1895, when women of the Columbian Club established a subscription library and free reading room in City Hall. The Columbian Club women kept the reading room going for ten years. Meanwhile, they helped to secure funds from Andrew Carnegie to construct a true public library and persuaded the city fathers to provide matching funds for its administration and maintenance. The club, determined to gain a library for Boise, was able to build on the foundation laid by the WCTU. Later service groups would build on its successes in turn.

The Columbian Club's efforts were not limited to the Boise library; the club also helped to establish Idaho's State Library Commission and Traveling Library. Columbian Club members cooperated with women's clubs in other Idaho communities, helping them to establish their own free libraries. Within Boise, the club worked to promote everything from city parks and tree-planting to anti-spitting ordinances and scholarships. It even had a hand in establishing the Idaho State Historical Society. Its members' work reflected a

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(continued from Vol. 2, No. 1)

THE CAXTON PRINTERS, LTD. A Tree of Knowledge and Industry by Pam Hardenbrook

In the year 1928, according to some of J.H. Gipson's writings, the company was "making more money than we really needed for our modest wants. ...It was with the idea of giving new writers everywhere such limited assistance as could be given, through printing their books and distributing them to the reviewers, that we first began to publish." J.H. felt that America should have at least one publishing house that might be classed as non-commercial—that was not dependent upon revenues from its publishing venture for support.

Gipson summarized his purpose for going into publishing: There are, it is believed, many sound reasons why the decentralization of publishing would be advantageous to America, but probably none of these weighed very heavily with us when we first began to consider the establishing of a real publishing house. Probably the real reason was that all of us love books and wanted to have some part in making them.

In later years, he recounted his original objectives:

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LIMBERLOST PRESS: LETTERPRESSING THE LANGUAGE OF THE TRIBE by Rick Ardinger

While in Wyoming, we printed a small collection of poems by Sam Hazo, head of the International Poetry Forum in Pittsburgh. The book was called *The Color of Reluctance*, printed in an edition of 800 copies. I remember once setting two pages, printing the run, and redistributing the type into cases, only to find a typo after the work was done. I remember the three of us standing there staring at the typo, wondering whether to let it go or whether we should reset and reprint. We decided to reset the pages, press again, and order more paper. It was a valuable lesson. Had we let the it stand, it probably would have been the one thing we all remembered about the book—and my apprenticeship. And as Isaac Bashevis Singer once said, fewer poets die from typhus than from typos.

I returned home to Idaho and my own presses in the winter of 1986, broke and unable to afford paper, but eager to start our first letterpressed book. As our first venture, we decided to publish a small collection of poems by Bruce Embree, a poet from Inkom, Idaho, near Pocatello. It would be his first book too. We had

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The Redneck Press & the Redneck Review of Literature by Penelope Reedy

American believe themselves to be more FREE than other countries, including Canada, England and France, but I wonder. Do we have freedom, if we feel forced by law and precedent to be only non-offensive? "Being nice" can never be the goal of literature since causing offense is often its most constructive tactic. For instance, outlandish remarks, such as those the late Ed Abbey used to spout, can force people to rethink inappropriate positions and dangerous patterns while those who pander and appease simply put the public to sleep while bulldozers raze our houses. Personally, I have a specific aversion to being muzzled. Such has been the nature of my oppression that whenever someone says to me, "You can't say that!" I know it must be said, or written, or printed. Consequently, I own my press.

I print *Redneck* myself on a used Multilith 1250. In the past it has been produced on everything from a mimeograph machine, a friend's copy machine, to "on-the-sly offset" in a government print shop somewhere in the bowels of Boise.

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The goal of the business was simple. A book must be well written, interesting, and authentic. The physical formats of Caxton books are a pride of the firm. The types are easily read, the paper is long-wearing and opaque, and the bindings are sturdy and attractive. ...We like to make them with loving care and use the best paper we can afford—good heavy paper with a real printing surface and some weight.

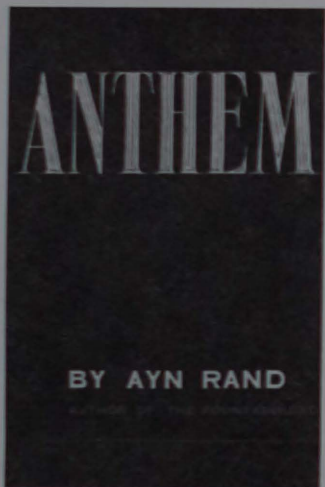
Manuscripts began pouring in; the staff worked diligently; the presses rolled. By 1928, Caxton brought out five titles. The following year, it was five more. In 1930, this output was doubled. Over the next six years, over 100 new books were released, and Gipson admitted that quantity of books was "too many for our resources."

The plant had to be moved into larger quarters and the staff increased to eighty. Operating the intricate machinery were local townspeople, who learned the process on-the-job, often using the trial and error method. None of the staff was especially trained for their work prior to their Caxton employment. Printing requires highly skilled workers, usually found only in great industrial centers, but Gipson was committed to hiring local people. The company trained these people to become expert binders and printers, with a broad knowledge of the trade.

The lean years of the depression hit the firm as it did everyone else. Profits went into a tailspin. Sales shrunk from a half million to less than two hundred thousand. The company managed to stay in business, however, and no employees were laid off.

In the midst of the depression, a new manuscript, written by a native Idahoan, came in. It had been turned down by a number of jittery eastern publishers, and the book's frankness made even Jim Gipson wary. He sent the manuscript to an eminent western writer, asking his opinion. The answer came in no uncertain terms: "This is powerful and brutal and ought to be published. But it's not for Caxton to undertake. If you print this, the people of Idaho will probably drive you from their borders!" The stringent words must have been the "sic-em" J.H. needed to forge ahead, for he decided to publish the book.

Until this time, Caxton books had attracted little more than regional interest. Gipson's decision to publish this novel by Vardis Fisher, *In Tragic Life*, brought nation-wide recognition for both author and pub-



NEWS FROM THE CENTER

★ NOW AVAILABLE: The ICB video documentary, *Journeys of the Lapwai Mission Press*, a 25-minute history of the first press in Idaho and the Pacific Northwest. Narrated by Wilfred P. Schoenberg, produced by University Television Productions, BSU. \$19.95 (plus \$3 shipping) from Bookstore, 1910 University Drive, Boise, ID 83725.

★ National Banned Books Week is being celebrated by the ICB 16 September-7 October with "Invitation to a Book Burning." The exhibit features a Stephen Laub sculpture, videos, and recorded music. The exhibit has been favorably reviewed in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Free catalogue on request.

★ The ICB statewide Advisory Board meets at the Center 14 October. In addition to regular business, the board will be consulting with representatives of the Idaho Council of Teachers of English on *Idaho by the Book*, the tetra-tetraflexagon literary map of Idaho which will be jointly

published by ICB and ICTE in September, 1996.

★ The Idaho Commission on the Arts has granted ICB a \$1,250 grant for production of an English/Spanish catalogue and video to accompany "Booker's Dozen," the Center's 1996 statewide travelling exhibition. Free catalogue on request.

★ With the assistance of ICB Advisory Board member Max Leek (Director, Marshall Public Library, Pocatello), ICB is planning a fall debut on the World Wide Web.

★ Next issue of *The ICB Newsletter: Design of the Western Writers Series, Contemporary Russian Artist's Books in Idaho, ICB on the WWW, and final installments of articles on Idaho Presses.*

OTHER BIBLIO NEWS

★ "The Uncommon Book: Structure • Space • Language" is a multi-disciplinary exhibit and series of performances,

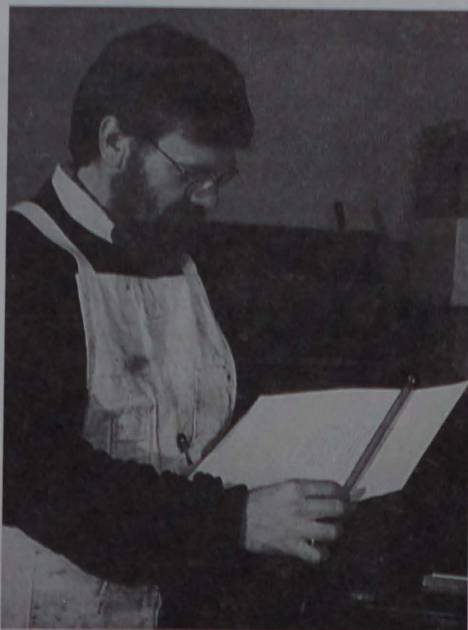
lectures, residencies and workshops sponsored by the Sun Valley Center for the Arts and Humanities 20 October-9 December. Participants include Don Guyot, Susan King, Susan Share and others. For information: POB 656, Sun Valley, ID 83353, phone 208.726.9491, fax 208.726.2344.

★ The Idaho Legislature has declared November 1995 as "Idaho Literacy Month." For further information contact: The Idaho Coalition for Adult Literacy, c/o Idaho Workers Opportunity Network, 225 N. 16th St., Boise, ID 83702.



The ICB NEWSLETTER is published biannually in April and October. Contributions, inquiries, requests for free subscriptions should be sent to: Idaho Center for the Book, Boise State University, Boise, ID 83725.

Limberlost . . .



Rick Ardinger

enough type to set two pages, press them, redistribute the type into the case, and reset two more pages.

For personal reasons that book, called *No Wild Dog Howled*, pressed in an edition of 260 copies, is still my favorite. The press work wasn't all that great, as I struggled with the idiosyncrasies of my worn-out press to attain consistent impression. I learned by doing that book on my own, without the helpful suggestions of Tom and Barb Rea. And I can remember sewing up that first copy in the kitchen and envisioning more books to come.

Nearly all the reviews of our books now comment favorably on the press work. But the type and design of a letterpressed book should not overshadow or intrude too obviously in a collection of poems. As Holbrook Jackson states in *The Printing of Books* (1947), "Self-effacement is the etiquette of the book printer." Letterpress is a subtle art. In no other kind of printing is the concept of "presentation" more acutely palpable than in letterpress printing, where printer sets his metal type to paper in a more physi-

cal, active sense. Experiments with type are tempered by tradition. They are physically much more demanding and challenging, and it shows in the finished product. Choice of type, paper, and design are visualized prior to setting, but the process of mechanical lock-up of type forms and taking that first impression culminate in a magically pleasing moment. Achieving further clarity in impression is like a quest for the right light, even though the masters of the craft refer to it as "the black art."

In letterpress the partnership of poet and printer seems so much more vital, perhaps especially these days since letterpress is a choice form of printing and no longer the standard. Today I select manuscripts of poems to publish with which I feel I can collaborate with the poet, and I want poets to feel that sense as well. I want poets to know the kind of work *Limberlost* does before work for consideration. I receive manuscripts daily from poets who have no idea what *Limberlost* does, poets who blindly submit form-letter queries in hopes of landing another publication. I usually return these submissions quickly.

In the spring of 1987, I met Harry Duncan, the master printer and publisher of Cumington Press of the 1930s, and, later, of Abattoir Editions at the University of Nebraska. Duncan was one of my heroes. Knowing my interest in letterpress, my brother in Omaha sent me a plane ticket to attend one of Duncan's final lecture/demonstrations before he retired. Duncan devoted his life to printing the works of now-famous poets, most notably William Carlos Williams. He published a small chapbook by

...concludes, next issue

Redneck...

The late Joe Singer of Mother of Ashes Press in Harrison, Idaho, printed it for a year or two until I purchased my own press from a fellow in Idaho Falls who had used it to produce commercial community phone books. I continued to operate the press in Twin Falls while I attended the College of Southern Idaho following my divorce from Camas County rancher/farmer Jim Reedy. I remarried in the fall of 1989 and after publishing two issues of an underground student newspaper which infuriated CSI President Meyerhoeffer—not the content, mind you, but the fact that I published and distributed it without "permission"—I hauled the press to Milwaukee where I attended and graduated from Marquette University, all the while continuing to publish and print *Redneck*. My husband, Jay Sloan, attended the graduate program in English during this time. That marriage dissolved a year ago and I found myself on the road again hauling my printing press nearly 2,000 miles back west (where I belong) accompanied by two of my four kids and two rats named George and Max. The press is currently sitting in poet Valez Bird's garage in Pocatello since the house I am able to rent is much too small to contain it.

As I read, sort and type manuscripts for my 20th anniversary issue, I am finding out what my expensive degree in English has prepared me for. While job hunting, I applied for food stamps. In order to get them, the HEW required me to attend "job preparedness" sessions. During one of the classes, I was in-



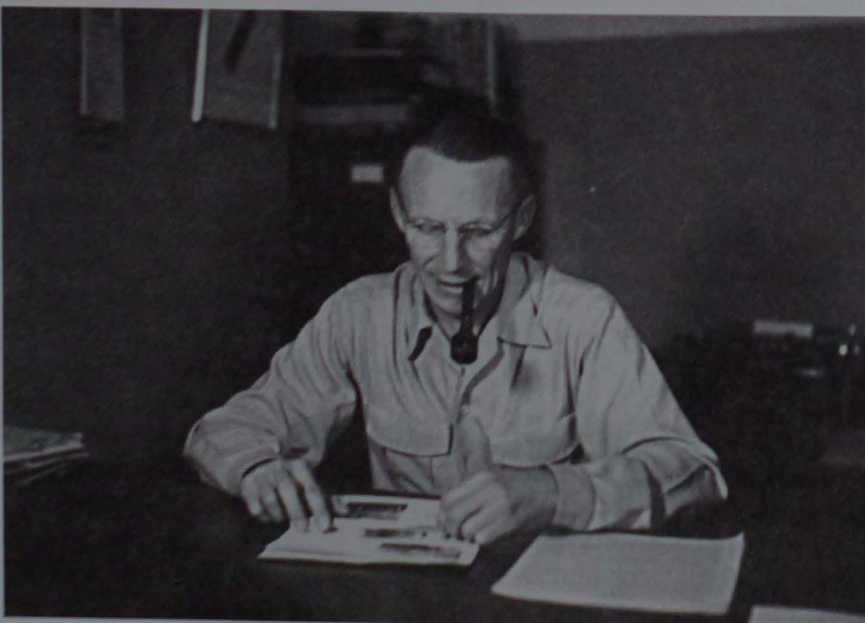
Penelope Reedy

formed by the instructor that I shouldn't tell employers that I have a degree since Pocatello employers (men) are threatened by women with educations. In the years before I got my degree, these same agency people were telling me that employers wouldn't even talk to me without one.

As karma would have it, I find I am currently working as a part-time dispatcher for the Idaho State Police. My superiors tell me I must keep to the straight and narrow and watch who my friends are or I could "lose my job." How am I supposed to interpret such statements? During late nights at the radio console, however, I am learning about the underside of Pocatello, learning a few new redneck jokes from the patrolmen who wander in and out, while developing a unique respect for my fellow dispatchers and officers who must daily face an increasingly hysterical public.

Ever since I discovered that *Redneck* was conceived only a few miles from the birthplace of that cantankerous 20th century supporter of the small press, Ezra Pound, I like to place *Redneck* in the company of his modern compatriots—Harriet Monroe's *Poetry*, Margaret Anderson's *The Little Review*, Harriet Weaver's *The Egoist*, Sylvia Beach's brave publishing in Paris of Joyce's *Ulysses* (interesting that it was censored in the U.S. in spite of our First Amendment), and I see myself sitting at a long table sipping (or guzzling as the case may be) a glass of wine in Publisher Heaven with the likes of Harry Crosby, Bryher, Wyndham Lewis, Virginia and Leonard Woolf, etc., etc. Even if history denies me such a position, that's the space from which my incentive erupts.

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Jim Gipson, Jr.

over a million copies sold under the Caxton imprint.

The most popular book Caxton ever published was a child's book by the author Dell J. McCormick, *Paul Bunyan Swings His Axe*. The book, which first went to the press in 1937, is still in print today, with over one million copies sold.

PRUNED BY FIRE

Although Caxton's publishing department tries to maintain a complete collection of all the books produced over the years, many of the early books are missing. The primary reason is an event that occurred fifty-eight years ago, St. Patrick's Day, March 17, 1937. A little after 9:00 AM a Caxton employee spotted smoke pouring from a room containing paper stock. Jim Gipson, Jr. ran to his father's home, about four blocks away, to tell him about the fire. The company president finished eating his breakfast, then walked down to the shop—dressed in hat, coat, and collar—to watch the fire. Several workers tried to put out the blaze, but it was too late. By evening the plant was gone. The loss estimated at \$500,000, it was at that time the most costly fire in Caldwell's history. Nearly all books, school textbooks, and company records were destroyed in the blaze. In his editorial published the same day as the fire, the editor of the *Caldwell News Tribune* predicted Caxton would rise from the ashes. He was right. Within days the plant was back in a limited production. Gipson arranged for employees to use other local presses, working in rented buildings scattered around the community. In just sixty days a new building was completed—the same structure that still houses the business offices.

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lisher, as the book became the most discussed novel of the year.

Because of the publicity fostered by the Vardis Fisher book, a London publisher began seeking English rights. Since that time, a number of Caxton books have been produced in England, and German rights to some books have also been sold. Several juvenile books from Caxton's list have become Literary Guild adoptions, including *Lucretia Ann on the Oregon Trail*, by Ruth Gipson Plowhead. This 1937 children's classic was reprinted in 1993 to commemorate the Sesquicentennial of the Oregon Trail.

Caxton was the first American firm to recognize author Ayn Rand, a zealous advocate of capitalism and free enterprise. *Anthem*, first published in 1937 has been reprinted eleven times by Caxton, with well