

Valverde Society Talk – Miniature Books

July 10, 2016

How it all started...

Shallow book shelves / Chuck Valverde / joined MBS in 2005

My First Mini Book - *A Letter from Benjamin Franklin to a Young Friend on the Choice of a Mistress* Hand-printed in 2 colors on an 8x12 Chandler & Price treadle-powered platen press. Handset 10-pt type; hand-sewn; hand-bound in calfskin with hand-tooled embellishments; raised bands; Jeff & Linda Sandlin

Why Miniature Books?

Relatively scarce – many modern ones are printed in limited editions

Don't demand great quantities of storage space or shelving

They represent the supreme effort and skill of printers and binders

Mini books easily surpass larger books as an investment

They are uncommon...many dealers have never even heard of them

They are small enough to allow for mobility. Napoleon possessed his own miniature travelling library

They are educational and interesting! Subject matter runs the gamut of human activity

Notable collectors include FDR, Eleanor Roosevelt, Napoleon. Lincoln carried minis in his pocket

They are fascinating conversation topics to all ages

They are usually not overly expensive

Owners are universally gracious and cordial people; anyone who has attended a Conclave will agree

They are beautiful, charming and appealing

Msgr. Weber's Intro

"Almost as old as the written word is its presentation in miniature form. Mini-manuscripts executed entirely by hand antedated the printing press by several centuries. Miniature books, as we know them, trace their existence to Johann Gutenberg and the revolution he brought to the printing world.

Miniature books were first issued for personal convenience. Bibles, prayer books, dictionaries and the like were originally envisioned to fit the pockets of 17th and 18th century travelers.

Every conceivable subject matter has found its way into miniatures. There are biographies, histories, eulogies, cartoons, almanacs, inaugural addresses, poetry, travel guides, sermons, anthologies, testimonials, ad infinitum.

Some of the little gems are exceptionally fine works of art, complete with leather binding, fine paper and gold lettering. Others are less pretentious but still desirable. Generally, the designation "miniature book" is reserved for those measuring no more than 3" by 3"."

Miniature Manuscripts

There are relatively few miniature manuscripts in the world. The Huntington has only 11. Julian Edison, probably the best known collector of miniature books still living today, has at least 2 dozen illuminated manuscripts. The most common were Books of Hours. Most date from 1450 to 1550 and were written by scribes on parchment, often with brown ink. Initial letters were highlighted in colors and illuminated in gold, and further decorated in leafy scrollwork and tiny paintings.

Shannon Mitchell is an American calligrapher and artist who began making miniature manuscripts in 1981. She's the leading contemporary scribe in her field. The themes she chooses are largely Biblical. Each requires from 150-275 hours to complete. She taught herself several languages and has created books in Latin, Hebrew, Middle English, German script and Japanese. All of her manuscripts are hand-bound in leather, have ribbon bookmarks and a hand-crafted brass clasp. This example is in Latin and is **Noah's Ark**, with 4 full-page paintings and illuminated capitals throughout.

Miniature Fore-Edge Paintings

These are uncommon to say the least. I have only one example which I saw advertised on eBay. I purchased it in 2005 from a Maryland dealer who was a friend of Louis Bondy. He took it off eBay and sold it to me directly. It's a French prayer book published in 1891, fleur de lis endpapers. Painting is of a castle on a grassy hill. At one time, Msgr. Weber had the largest collection of miniature fore-edge paintings...since sold to Jeff Weber.

Artistic Bindings

Leather is the most common binding but gifted bookbinders have decorated the covers with exotic and precious **jewels, mother-of-pearl**, chased **silver & gold**, elaborate **needlework, wood, ivory, bone**, etc. Books can also be found bound in **paper money, snakeskin** & other skins and encased in **walnut shells**.

Antiquarian Books

Book of Hours w/**gauffered edges**

Pickering Diamond Classics (1820s) – Complete Shakespeare, Greek, Latin; by William Pickering (London)

Songs from Shakespeare's Plays – London (n.d.)

Cato Major by Cicero – Paris (1758) 4-1/2 pt type; Dutch floral endpapers

Anacreontis Carmina cum Sapphonis (1761) Greek text; Glasgow

The Divine Comedy – Milan (1878) Raised bands, dentelles, endpapers; 1st use of fly's eye 2-pt type

Petrarch's Rime – Venice (1879) Raised bands, dentelles, endpapers

G. Barbera – Italian classics – Vade Mecum – 1900s

David Bryce – prolific – chained Bible – *Midget Library* – Complete Shakespeare (c. 1900) Glasgow

The Cabinet of Lilliput

In the world of miniature bookdom, there are several "cornerstones" which collectors avidly seek. I was able to acquire one such treasure in 2007. England's John Harris printed and published a portable child's library in 1802. This set is called **The Cabinet of Lilliput** and it contains 12 books in paper bindings with engraved labels, in a wooden box with a sliding pictorial lid. These sets were marketed to the affluent and were prized then as they are today. And today complete sets are quite rare.

Gigantick Histories

Earlier than the Harris juvenile libraries, Thomas Boreman published a series of 10 books for children called Gigantick Histories. **The History and Description of the Famous Cathedral of St. Paul's, London**, was published in 1741 in London. The price was 4 pence! There are 125 pages followed by advertisements for other books in the series. Very rare.

Children's Antiquarian Books

The Book of Nouns (1806) rare – London – Darton & Harvey – engravings – 62 charming pictures

Children's Bread – Religious Tract Society, London (n.d.) Daily Texts for the Young

Thumb Bibles – over 300 different from various countries; mostly USA; Newbery Bible 1780

Aunt Laura and Aunt Fanny – 30 books – 5 sizes; 6 in each size – moralistic and very readable (1860s)

Pocketful of Rye Series – many titles all w/floral endpapers, paper spine, string ties; green ink; rhymes

8 Bookmites for Children – Stoll & Edwards, NYC (1926) Rare in original box

Almanacs

Company of Stationers – 233 years (1680-1912); totally engraved until the 19th c.; later moveable type; they were printers to the British Royal family

Schloss – English; very tiny – less than ¾" (1830s and 1840s) paper or leather – steel-engraved portraits

French Almanacs (1740-1850) 100+ titles - given to favored patrons of Paris chocolate shops at New Years

American paper almanacs: Boston Almanacs (sewed spine) – Hazeltine – Piso – Colgate

Calendars

Atlas

The smallest atlas in existence was reproduced from the original for Queen Mary's Doll House Library in 1928. *Atlas of the British Empire* has 12 double-page colored maps and measures just 2 inches tall.

Smoking

1870 - *Smoker's Text Book* – praises smoking (scarce)

1970 - Jack R. Levien's *Have a Cigarette* – satirical essay on the perils of smoking

Cookbooks

Photo Albums - with tintypes

Nazi Propaganda Booklets – 1930s – 2" x 1-1/2" – issued in sets; given as receipts for donations to "Winter Relief of the German People"

Japanese Books - with woodblock prints (1960s)

French Books

Personal Favorites

Lincoln's Last Hours – Black Cat Press – Army Surgeon present at assassination, death and autopsy

L. G. Challenger – book dealer and amateur bookbinder

William Lewis Washburn (1940s)

One-of-a-Kind

Bookmobile on the Styx

From Your Niece Violet in Chicago (1944) to Uncle August

Kostbare Puppen (Precious Dolls)

Micro-miniatures (1/4" to 1")

Ultra-micro-miniatures (less than 1/4")

Galileo a Madama Christina de Lorena (1615)

Printed by the Salmin Brothers in Padua in 1896 in the exceedingly small fly's eye type (2-point). It has a woodcut portrait as a frontispiece. Smallest book ever printed from moveable type. There are fewer than a dozen known copies today, according to Msgr. Weber. It is considered the greatest marvel of bookmaking known today and it is the most famous miniature book. It was issued in printed blue paper wrappers. My copy is bound in gilt-stamped brown leather with a matching slipcase.

The hitherto unpublished letter of Galileo was first printed in the collected edition of the scientist's works in 1895. In it, Galileo gave his friend and chief patron one of his earliest and most eloquent pleas for the harmony of religion and science. It offended the Catholic Church; Galileo faced the Inquisition and was found guilty of heresy. He was sentenced to house arrest for the rest of his life.

20th Century California Publishers

Barbara J. Raheb - 520+ titles; 1993 article in *Parade Magazine*; pop-ups; hand-coloring, etc.

Dawson's Book Shop

Bela and Mariana Blau

Sunflower Press

Junipero Serra Press / El Camino Real Press

Juniper Von Phitzer

Lorson's Books and Prints

Tabula Rasa Press

Ash Ranch Press

Peter and Donna Thomas

Poole Press

Tenfingers Press

Richard J. Hoffman

Kater-Crafts Bookbinders

Gloria Stewart / Imprenta Glorias

Artists Books

New York Reflections – Lewis Gerry Editions – 2015 – copy #4 of 80 set in 5-1/2-pt Adobe Caslon on mould-made paper

Pequeno Press – unusual structures