

Special Directory Issue

SOCIETY  
FOR THE  
STUDY  
OF

MIDWESTERN  
LITERATURE

Newsletter  
Volume Three  
Number Two  
Summer, 1973



Society For the Study  
of Midwestern Literature  
Newsletter

Volume III, Number Two

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**The Third Annual Conference**

The Third Annual Conference will be held on Saturday, October 6, 1973, at the Kellogg Center, Michigan State University. Format, as in previous years, will include a morning panel discussion, lunch with a speaker, an afternoon panel, and a convivium. Each panel will consist of a moderator and four members, each of whom will present a ten minute statement before general discussion with all members of the conference.

Topic for the morning panel will be "Images of City and Country in Midwestern Literature" and the afternoon panel will be "Mythical Dimensions of Midwestern Literature."

Those who are interested in participating in either of the discussions please write David D. Anderson, 240 Bessey Hall, MSU, East Lansing, Mich. 48823.

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**Help Wanted**

The Newsletter continues to need reviews, short essays, checklists, bibliographies, notices, and other items of interest.

If you are eligible for emeritus status in the Society, please notify us (although your annual dollar is not unwelcome).

The Newsletter also needs an indexer to prepare an annual index for each volume.

Bibliographer Don Pady continues to need assistance. His address is The Library, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa 50010

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Publication of the Midwest Annual is awaiting more submissions from the membership and improved finances.

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The 1973 MLA Annual Meeting in Chicago will again include a seminar on Midwestern literature. Panel discussions, with questions and comments from other participants, usually work well at such seminars. One possible arrangement might be to have a brief statement from each panel member on one particular theme in the literature of a Midwestern state (e.g. The Myth of Lincoln in Illinois Literature, The Prairie as Active Force in Nebraska literature) followed by a discussion in which we might continue to fill out our literary map of the Midwest. As Program Chairman, I would very much like to hear from anyone interested in serving as a panel member.

Blair Whitney  
Department of American  
Thought & Language  
Michigan State University  
East Lansing, Mich.  
48823

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All members of the Society are invited to the special program to be held at the Newberry Library, Chicago at 7:30 on December 28.

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Under a faculty research grant from East Texas State University, I am compiling a selection of the letters of Emerson Hough, an Iowa writer, for possible publication under the title, The Selected Letters of Emerson Hough. I have recently (March 28-31, 1973) returned from Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana, where I did some research in the Lilly Library holdings of Hough's letters in the Bobbs-Merrill collection. I have enough material now to edit a two-volume edition of the letters



and have yet to look at the Hough collection on deposit at the Iowa State Department of History and Archives, Des Moines, Iowa, and those at the State University of Iowa, Iowa City. The Huntington Library, the Alderman Library at the University of Virginia, Charlottesville, and the Humanities Research Center at the University of Texas at Austin, have also provided me with some valuable material.

I shall be working on this project this summer under the auspices of the Organized Research Office of East Texas State University, directed by Dr. H.M. Lafferty.

This spring, the Revisionist Press of New York City will publish two books of mine. One is entitled, Vardis Fisher: The Novelist as Poet and one a collection of essays on Fisher as yet untitled.

Dorothy C. Grover  
East Texas State Univ.

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#### THE WILLA CATHER CENTENNIAL, 1873-1973

Seventy years ago, in April 1903, Willa Cather published her first book, a collection of poems, APRIL TWILIGHTS. In April 1973 the University of Nebraska Press is proud to present UNCLE VALENTINE AND OTHER STORIES, the fifth volume in its series of Willa Cather's early and uncollected writings. The publication of this book means that all of Willa Cather's signed short fiction is once again in print, and it occurs, happily enough, in her centennial year.

Miss Cather, who was born in Back Creek Valley, Virginia, on December 7, 1873, came with her family to Webster County, Nebraska, in 1883, and began her professional career in Lincoln while writing for the Nebraska State Journal while she was still a student at the University of Nebraska from which she graduated in 1895. Although she lived mostly in the East after 1896, she returned frequently to Nebraska and it is the setting of half of her twelve novels and a third of her short stories. Before Miss Cather's death in New York City on April 24, 1947, her work had won her a world-wide audience and a host of honors, among them the Pulitzer Prize, the Prix Femina Americain, the

Gold Medal of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and a dozen honorary degrees.

In commemoration of the hundredth anniversary of Miss Cather's birth, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln is sponsoring a year-long series of events known collectively as the Willa Cather Centennial Festival. Among these events is an international seminar on "The Art of Willa Cather," which will be held at the University on October 25-28, 1973, and which will be attended by thirty-five distinguished scholars from the United States, Canada, England, France, Italy, and Japan. The purpose of the seminar, which is supported by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, is to re-examine and re-define Willa Cather's fictional techniques, themes, and goals in the light of new bibliographical, biographical, and critical discoveries. The proceedings of the seminar will be published in the spring of 1974.

In August Miss Cather will be honored by a commemorative postage stamp in the American Arts series, with first-day covers to be issued at Red Cloud, Nebraska, the town which Miss Cather made famous in her writings, and the home of the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial and Educational Foundation.

University of Nebraska  
Press

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#### The Great Lakes Review

The Great Lakes Review: a Journal of Midwest Culture is soliciting scholarly manuscripts in the areas of Midwestern literature, folklore, architecture, bibliography, history, art, music, etc. We expect to publish a limited amount of fiction and poetry, and would not be averse to publishing personal narratives whose subject matter was relevant to the special concerns of the journal. We expect to publish our first number in December, the second in May of 1974. For the present we hope to continue on a twice yearly basis. Manuscripts submitted for consideration should conform to the MLA Stylesheet, 2nd ed. A return



envelope and postage should accompany all submissions.

Editor is Jerry Nemanic, Department of English, Northeastern Illinois University, Bryn Mawr at St. Louis Avenue, Chicago 60625.

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### The American Examiner

The recent issue of The American Examiner: A Forum of Ideas (Winter, 1973) included three responses to Forum Question #2 "What does American Studies have to say about the uses of the American past in contemporary art, culture, or thought?" F. Richard Thomas responded with a poem which captures the current tensions of the American Dream in personal and mythic terms. Macel Ezell's article "The Use of Right-Wing Fiction in American Studies" focuses on a little known but rich source of ideas and attitudes toward America past, present, and future in publications of the Conservative and reactionary press. Bruce Curtis discussed the moral view of the American past and present in Kopit's contemporary drama, Indians, in his article "The Use and Abuse of the Past in American Studies: Arthur Kopit's Indians A Case Study". The issue also included two responses to Forum Question #1 "What is the relationship between American Studies and Popular Culture?". Douglas A. Noverr wrote on "The Aftermath of Forum Question #1: Some Considerations" and Paul Somers responded with "How Many Little Richards Can Dance on the Head of a Pin: The Territorial Imperative in Popular American Culture Studies." The next issue of The American Examiner will contain a variety of views and responses to Arthur Kopit's Indians and an announcement of the forum questions or particular issue focuses for next year's numbers.

Douglas Noverr

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### The Unanswerable Question

Dear Mr. Anderson:

Thank you for the invitation, which is accepted with alacrity. I probably will not be able to attend too many meetings, but membership in such a Society constitutes support of sorts, and this I am eager to do.

The dollar is enclosed. If you can tell me how you keep an organization going on such a nominal fee, I will broadcast the intelligence to the politicians and bureaucrats who read my column in self defense.

Anyhow, good luck to you and my appreciation for being accepted into the Society, sight unseen.

Cordially,

Judd Arnett

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### Something for Everybody

One major purpose of the Society is to provide opportunities for members to get together and talk about Midwestern literature. As earlier announcements in this issue suggest, we are attempting to have at least four such gatherings this Fall - The Annual Conference, The seminar at Midwest MLA and two programs at MLA. We hope to have a session at the Popular Culture Association meeting in the Spring. If you have other suggestions, please send them in. Details of all the above will follow.

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## Announcements

Linda Wagner has recently published two essays on Hemingway, "The Marinating of For Whom the Bell Tolls," Journal of Modern Literature, 11 (November 1972) and "The Sun Also Rises: One Debt to Imagism," Journal of Narrative Technique, 11 (May, 1972). She has also edited William Faulkner. Four Decades of Criticism (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1973).

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David D. Anderson will give a paper, "Linguism, National Identity, and National Unity in Pakistan" at the 29th International Congress of Orientalists, meeting at the Sorbonne, Paris, July 16-21, 1973.

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The Newsletter would like to begin a census of courses in Midwestern literature or culture, publishing complete descriptions of courses whenever possible. Please send in your descriptions for the Fall issue, if possible.

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Clarence Andrews has received a grant of \$2500. from Michigan Technological University to further his history of Midwestern literature. On April 30 he spoke to the Houghton County Historical Society on "Big Annie and the 1913 Copper Strike", the text of which will be published in Michigan History. On October 12 he will speak to the Iowa State Library Association in Cedar Rapids.

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A seminar on Midwestern Literature, focusing upon the literature of midwestern states and regions, will be held at the Midwest MLA meeting at the Conrad Hilton Hotel in Chicago November 1 - 3, 1973. If interested in participating, write Dave Anderson.

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This issue of the Newsletter contains the Directory of Members. Invite interested colleagues who are not listed to join, and if your library is not an institutional members, recommend that it join.

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## SHOULD WEST VIRGINIA BE ADMITTED TO THE MIDWEST?

When he was a young and eloquent campaigner in Illinois, Stephen A. Douglas finished a speech in a small town and began gathering up his notes as the crowd drifted away. A leggy, craggy-faced fellow clambered shyly onto the wooden platform and approached the man who had just spoken.

"Mr. Douglas," said the gawky youngster, "you are a fine speechmaker, but I want to let you know that some day I aim to git up on a platform and debate with you."

Mr. Douglas smiled. "Is that so? Well, young man, I wish to compliment you on being so ambitious, and I hope you achieve your high purpose. Tell me, what is your name?"

"Abe," said the tall fellow.

"Abe what?" asked Douglas.

"Abe Feldpaush."

Actually, Abe just happened to be passing through Illinois at that time, on his way back to Western Virginia. What he hoped to debate with Douglas was whether a state could long exist with fat slaveholders in the southeast and thin abolitionists in the northwest.

Abe was still around when Western Virginia broke off from Virginia in 1861 and became an independent state which supported the Union. Though it was well known that the Indian word Kanawha was first proposed as the name of the new state, it is less well known that Abe's suggestion of Midwest was considered before the Union admitted the new state in 1863 under the title of West Virginia.

All that is recorded of Abe's famous argument in 1862 is that he said, "Dang it, we got us a new state which is the most northern of the Southern States, the most southern of the Northern States, the most eastern of the Western States, and the most western of the Eastern States. We are the real middle of everything but we ain't Virginians jist because we are west of them varmints."



## SHOULD WEST VIRGINIA BE ADMITTED ...

Abe was so angry with the final name choice that he gave up politics and became West Virginia's first inventor. He is remembered mainly for his long knife which could cut four loaves of bread at one time. Abe called it a four-loaf cleaver.

Recently, Dr. Abe Feldpaush IV, who teaches Stripmine Ecology at West Virginia University, was asked about his greatgrandfather's famous suggestion.

"Greatpappy was right, of course," said Dr. Abe, "but he had only that limited geographical argument. Today we would add topographically that the hills of West Virginia complement the flatlands of the Midwest. We would point out that Chief Cornstalk was the state's most famous Indian, and there's nothing more Midwest than corn. The Midwest is an earthy place and it was a native West Virginian, Pearl Buck, who wrote that great novel The Good Earth. Finally, the Midwest has the bread and the baskets and we have the breads and the booze and they obviously go together."

When asked if there was any hope that the state would be renamed, Abe IV replied sadly, "Nope, I suppose it's too late. The best we can hope for is that West Virginia will be admitted to the Midwest in the near future."

Abe's wife, Nancy, had the final word: "As we Hanks would say, that's a lot of Feldpaush! The question is whether or not the Midwest should be admitted to West Virginia!"

Jerry J. West  
Michigan State University

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## Robert Ingersoll: A Review

The small boy joining the crowd of hatted, sleeve-gartered men on Main Street on a hot July Sunday afternoon, circa 1875, notes a mildly revolting smell drifting in amid the ordinary compound of dust and sweat and horse-flesh. It is the reek, surely, of that brimstone the minister foretold. As the speaker, interrupting his progress to the town hall, climbs to talk briefly from a wagon bed, the boy hears a clatter, the sound not of worn boots but of cloven hooves. A thrill, for the orator is Matchless Bob Ingersoll. The boy's impression endures, for in our fickle national memory this politician, lawyer, orator, and agnostic who was essentially a humane idealist was destined to join that Great American Bestiary which includes dirty old men, school dropouts, Reds, college administrators, and, his category, atheists.

David D. Anderson's Robert Ingersoll (Twayne) corrects for its readers the narrow focus of that memory, showing us that Ingersoll, though neither "profound or original," was "spokesman for an age of change." Anderson lists the numerous paradoxes surrounding and embodied in this spokesman who advocated a humanism that sought the coming of a perfect society, yet clung to economic and political conservatism; became an ardent Republican but achieved no office during two generations of that party's ascendancy; championed the Negro yet was almost silent while the iron maiden of Reconstruction tightened its daggered embrace. Ingersoll, as Anderson sees it, represents the forces, ideas, and compromises of the decades when the West was filling up, Darwin and the machine were ending Romanticism, and humanistic ideals were having the degree of success they usually have in societies wherein enterprise and resources are more plentiful than care for one's fellow man.

Like Thomas Paine, Herbert Spencer, Darwin, Henry George, the several Huxleys, Havelock Ellis, and Bertrand Russell, Ingersoll is a favorite of publishers who put out the inexpensive series of deep thinkers that introduce many young readers to a world larger than the family dinner table. Browsing through an



edition of Ingersollia, one finds collections of fragments, a melange of ideas associated not in a logical progression but only by loose similarity in theme, the whole held together by the author's obvious humanity, the concerned though often uninformed good will with which he approaches such topics as "The Liberty of Man, Woman, and Child," "Crimes Against Criminals," "Art and Morality," "How to Reform Mankind." Ingersoll's writings are orations, not essays. Delivered from the wagon bed on Main Street, they could make a reputation; in cold print, without the earnest mien, the rise and fall of voice at significant phrases, the sweat and collar loosening of visible emotion, they are at best rambling meditations upon themes already preached by liberals for a century and more.

Little in Ingersoll's public work would constitute a program for action. Indeed, his discussion of such a topic as the need for women's liberty is so confused, so obviously contradictory, that it could not give rise to proposals for legislation meant to put into practice the ideals it wants to espouse. As Anderson observes, Ingersoll's social criticism is "invariably narrow and sentimental, focusing upon shortcomings in middle-class relations rather than upon those between classes."

Anderson discusses the influence of Ingersoll's upbringing, especially of his Calvinistic but, withal, tolerable father, and of his early reading of Gibbon, the Romantic poets, Paine, Volney, Burns, and Shakespeare, the diet of the young reader in a day when nourishment had not yet been drowned by sweets and fillers. Ingersoll had little formal education, a lack that seems to have harmed him just as much as it damaged Franklin, Lincoln, Howells, Twain, and Edison.

He became the orator of his time and perhaps the outstanding lawyer as well.

He was shrewd enough to see that the law is a set of guidelines, not a divinity (even before he was admitted to the Illinois bar, he saw that, as in the institution of slavery, the law can serve to perpetuate injustice). Examining several of his famous cases, Anderson concludes that Ingersoll perceived the law essentially as a business and that he used what-

ever devices were necessary to win a case, including "sheer sentimental nonsense and semantic trickery." He was a great trial lawyer because of his theatrical ability in the courtroom. Similarly, his political career was that of an accomplished orator, a competitor in the arena rather than a philosopher, a man seldom driven to such distasteful acts as putting principle ahead of victory. Yet, Anderson says, his ultimate aim was the high one of freedom for all men.

The heart of the matter for Americans living after Ingersoll's legal and political careers are forgotten is, of course, his agnosticism. Giving this topic his longest chapter, Anderson finds Ingersoll essentially a popularizer, yet a central figure in religio-social controversy because he expressed in persuasive oratory the vision of progress and perfectibility that he drew from his reading in eighteenth century rationalism and early nineteenth century Romanticism. Even here, in the controversy where he won his lasting fame, Ingersoll operated as much by fairly ignorant faith as did the for the most part ignorant religionists who argued with him. Eloquence, once again, rather than original thinking, was his forte. Yet he helped secularize America, contributing to that shift which was taking man's thought from the after world to this one.

Throughout his career in the law, oratory, and quasi-theological controversy, Ingersoll drew on his early reading: though his taste was unformed, he was, Anderson observes, in some respects a guide to an art and a quality of thought superior to his own. And, if he contributed nothing original to the areas in which he spent his life; if, even, he made serious mistakes in political and social tactics, defending forces that frustrated libertarian ideals, he never-theless was a prophet who taught Americans to question all dogma and thereby contributed to social reform. Even his agnosticism, a creed now acceptable on the dustiest Main Street, may in Anderson's view prove to have been an important phase in man's search for answers to ultimate questions about his origins and purposes. Anderson concludes rightly that Ingersoll's contribution to American life is more important than that of most presidents of his time. All of us can see



that Ingersoll stirred hope for a dawn, even though he did not know where the East lay. And before we put him down as a bumbling mid-Victorian, let us reflect that we who live a century after the height of his fame cannot with all our sophistication claim to have achieved the goals he urges.

It is a pleasure to report that the book is itself a contribution. Anderson is a mature scholar who sees his man in his social, political, and ideational relationships, assesses his work sympathetically but rationally, and employs selected detail and judicious generalization to give a clear interpretation. This informed, well written book demonstrates that Anderson's growing national and international reputation is deserved.

Bernard F. Engel  
Michigan State Univ.

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Was He or Wasn't He? Warren G. Harding & his Biographers, OR The Growth of a Mid-western Myth

For more than forty years American presidents, with the single touching exception of Harry S. Truman in the campaign of 1948, have disassociated themselves from the memory or legacy of Warren G. Harding, and intellectuals, including historians, have taken refuge in snickers or worse when his name or his administration were mentioned. For much of that forty years the magnificent Harding Tomb in Marion, Ohio, has seemed an ironic joke to virtually everyone who knows of its existence - with, of course, the exceptions of the Marion Chamber of Commerce, the Harding Memorial Association, and the heirs of the dead President. Harding's historical reputation seemed buried for all time beneath the black granite with the President.

The reasons for this attitude were made obvious in the scandals that have been associated with his administration and his personal life, in the peculiar behavior of his surviving colleagues and widow, and most of all in the documents - memoirs, expose's, histories, biographies, and even

a novel - that his administration inspired in the decade between Harding's death and the repudiation of Republicanism in 1932.

The scandals, ranging from the Bureau and Teapot Dome to Nan Britton, need no recapitulation here, and the ineptitudes of the Harding heirs have continued through the handling of the Carrie Phillips letters in 1963, 64, and 65. The documentary history of Harding, his administration, and his era, which began in the obituaries that followed his death in August, 1923, carries through the biographical studies and controversies of 1968 and 1969 and continues through studies now approaching publication, is, however, lesser known but far more deserving of compilation than any list of scandals or ineptitudes. These studies not only combine to reveal the controversial facts and the even more controversial interpretations of those facts as well as the distortions and lies that have accompanied or hidden the truth for half a century, but they combine to produce something that goes beyond the events, political and personal out of which that truth is made. They combine to produce a remarkable impressionistic record, social and political, of the life and values of the Midwest as they affected the life of the nation not only in Harding's day but in ours.

The documentary record begins not with the news accounts or public statements of Harding and his subordinates or friends, but with the obituaries that appeared at his sudden, unexpected death in 1923. Of these, particularly significant are those that attempted to assess the meaning and value of the man and the office of President as he held it. Thus the obituary that appeared in Outlook of August, 1923, spoke authoritatively and ostensibly for the ages when it declared that "Among American Presidents Harding will be one of the least misunderstood. No myth will obscure his personality." In the September, 1923, issue of Current History the nature of that personality as it conducted the office of President was defined for the ages by his contemporaries as George Christian, Harding's secretary, wrote, "The accurate historian will rank Warren G. Harding as one of



the really great Presidents of the United States of America. No other, historical verdict will be possible.

With such statements the course of historical assessment seemed set, and even while the ensuing scandals were breaking, four biographies appeared in quick succession, each of which reaffirmed and provided evidence for those assessments. In these four (Joseph Mitchell Chapple, The Life and Times of Warren G. Harding (Boston: 1924), Willis Fletcher Johnson, The Life of Warren G. Harding (N.P., 1923), Thomas M. Russell; The Illustrious Life and Work of Warren G. Harding (Chicago, 1923), and C. Asher, He Was "Just Folks" (Chicago, 1923) There is no suggestion of scandal or of presidential difficulties or ineptitudes; conversely, in each, the emphasis lies upon Harding as hero, as leader, as common man, and in Emersonian terms as representative man. It appeared that the emergence of a Harding myth had begun. Each of the biographies is in the tradition of Horatio Alger, Jr. and of the obituary biographies that memorialized his predecessors and fellow Ohioans James A. Garfield and William McKinley. The Johnson volume is typical; chapter titles emphasize the peculiar myths that had become associated with Harding's name throughout his political career and his presidency. After the initial chapter "The Nation Shocked," Johnson recreates America's favorite traditional image in those that follow. "A Son of Pioneers", "First Steps on the Ladder of Fame", "The Mysteries of Type"; and "The Editor in Chief" provide a pattern that shows the inevitability of virtue's triumph over vice and of the success that virtue, combined with friendliness, sincerity, ambition, and perhaps some talent, makes possible.

Success on the smaller stage of Marion, Ohio, achieved, Harding's energy and charm lead him beyond it to "In the Public Eye"; "The Senator"; "Back to Normalcy"; and to the Presidency and beyond. Details only provide the difference between this volume and The Life and Work of Garfield, ... of Hayes, ... of Harrison, of Cleveland, of McKinley and of the dozens of similar campaign or obituary volumes that dominate the political lit-

erature of the late nineteenth century, and Harding appears here as bloodlessly deified as the candidates and deceased Presidents to whom that political literature is devoted.

Absent, of course, from these four posthumous eulogies is any suggestion of the substance of the books that comprise the next phase of Harding biography, a phase that rejects the initial Harding myth and nearly obliterates it in the construction of a newer and more durable image. This image is Harding of the Scandals, the President who presided over the looting and orgies of the Ohio Gang, who furtively admitted Nan Britton to the senatorial and presidential couch, who - much later it was revealed, - betrayed not only his wife but the mother of his child and a friend whose wife he seduced and ensnared. Finally, this is the Harding who died by his own hand or was murdered by his wife or his friend and physician. This is the Harding about whom his Attorney General could say and imply in open court:

Having been personal attorney for Warren G. Harding before he was Senator from Ohio and while he was Senator, and thereafter until his death. And for Mrs. Harding for a period of several years, and before her husband was elected President and after his death, And having been attorney for the Midland National Bank of Washington Court House, O., and for my brother, M.S. Dougherty, And having been Attorney - General of the United States during the time that President Harding served as President, And with all of these named, as attorney, personal friend, and Attorney-General, my relations were of the most confidential character as well as professional, I refuse to testify and answer questions put to me, because: The answer I might give or make and the testimony I might give might tend to incriminate me.

This statement, written by Harry M. Dougherty, Harding's Attorney General on March 21, 1926, when called to testify before



the Federal Grand Jury investigating alleged corruption in the custody of German property confiscated during the war, remains a key statement as well as an object of manipulation in much of the documentary material that began to appear after its publication and that continued to the late 1960's. Its significance in the light of the scandals that began to break can neither be overestimated or ignored in spite of the numerous interpretations and uses to which it can and has been put.

Although Harding had already received unfavorable attention in print, most notably by H. L. Mencken ("A Short View of Gamalielese," Nation CXII (April 27, 1921), it was largely of the sort typified by Mencken's comments on Harding's lack of precision in using the language. But before Daugherty's statement of 1926, the new Harding myth had already been started. In 1924, in a series of five articles by Bruce Bliven in the New Republic the tone was set for the attitude that would prevail among journalists and historians for the next forty years. Although the articles ("The Ohio Gang," New Republic XXXVIII (May 7, 1924); "The Ohio Gang," Ibid (May 14, 1924); "The Ohio Gang: Money Changers in the Temple," Ibid (May 21, 1924); "Charlie, Warren and Ned," Ibid (May 28, 1924); "The Era of Good Fellows," Ibid (June 4, 1924) do not attack the dead President personally; they concentrate upon a conspiracy of his cronies as the "Ohio Gang" which occuppies a central place in the myth and history of the Harding Administration, and they insist that Daugherty, as the leader of the Gang and the manipulator of the inept President, was the instigator of the Ohio Gang's raid upon the public trust and the one who profited most from its betrayal. Harding emerges from the series a dupe who unwittingly was used by the gang.

The first book to appear that incorporated and perpetuated this view was Revelry (1926), a novel by Samuel Hopkins Adams. This thinly-disguised fictional account has the President betrayed by his friends, while, adding two new dimensions to the growing Harding myth, the President's sexual affairs (perhaps a recognition of persistent rumors in Washington and Ohio not then publicized) and ultimately, faced with dis-

grace, suicide by poison (perhaps again a recognition of equally persistent and unpublicized rumors circulating in Washington and Ohio).

This fictional account, however timely and sensational, was just that and no more, but the sensational details were accepted as fact by many people, particularly when reinforced by two later books, each of which suggested that it was based on fact. The first of these was The President's Daughter, by Nan Britton, published in 1927 by the Elizabeth Ann Guild, Inc., after it had been rejected by a number of reputable publishers. The autobiography of a love-stricken young Marion girl who had followed her lover to Washington, remaining in the shadow even while bearing his child, the book provided the documentary evidence, however sensational and debatable, that the growing dimensions of scandal demanded. Often debated or denied, it has nevertheless never been successfully denied or refuted in its essentials, and until the early 1960's, the story was considered the foundation of the rumors about the President's sexual adventures that Revelry had already publicized.

The second book of this sort was The Strange Death of President Harding, by Gaston B. Means, a former FBI agent implicated in the Department of Justice scandals and imprisoned for his part in them. Written with the aid of May Dixon Thatcher and published in 1930, after Means was released from Atlanta Penitentiary, it was based on Means's testimony and alleged participation in events of the Harding Administration. It also asserted that Means had been employed by Mrs. Harding, to investigate the President's affair with Miss Britton and it purports to reveal the nature of Harding's death. As Means has it, the shadow of the coming scandals frightened Mrs. Harding, her love had turned to hatred, and, with the connivance of Harding's physician, Brigadier General Sawyer, she poisoned the President. Although Mrs. Thatcher later repudiated the book and her role in it, the book added further dimensions to the myth surrounding the dead president.

Before the end of the first decade after Harding's death, the myths began to take their place in the history of the era as



it was written, primarily by journalists. In succession, William Allen White published Masks In A Pageant in 1928, a dramatic retelling of the Harding story with the forceful inevitability of Greek tragedy; Frederick Lewis Allen published Only Yesterday (1931), a popular history of the 1920's in which the Harding story, as told by the testimony of participants, is dramatically retold and interpreted; and in 1933 Alice Roosevelt Longworth published Crowded Hours, which portrayed the White House under Harding in images reminiscent of the morality of saloon, the livery stable, or the small-town barber shop on Saturday night. Although elements of the myth were becoming dramatized during these years and overtones of tragedy were increasingly obvious, little new factual material had been added. In 1932 Harry Dougherty, with Thomas Dixon published The Inside Story of the Harding Tragedy, but again nothing new was added. Significantly or not Dougherty neglected to include any reference to his statement of March 21, 1926. Documentary inclusions are trivial.

Much of the blame for the lack of significant documentary material was placed upon Mrs. Harding and the Harding Memorial Association, organized to perpetrate the President's memory. Between the President's death and her own, Mrs. Harding gathered the President's papers and destroyed part of them. The extent and significance of the destruction remains a matter of debate to this day. After her death the papers fell into the hands of the Harding Memorial Association run by Harding friends and relatives, where they were closed for the following forty years. Certainly nothing remains that associate Harding with the scandals and there is nothing that substantiates the Nan Britton story, even in Miss Britton's possession. (If Means can be believed, Mrs. Harding was responsible for this lack also).

The lack of documentary evidence from Harding papers or from sources close to Harding handicapped the next two works on Harding and his administration. The most sympathetic of them, Mark Sullivan's Our Times, Vol VI, published in 1935, was delayed while Sullivan tried unsuccessfully to gain access

to the Harding Papers. The other, Incredible Era: The Life and Time of Warren Gamaliel Harding, published in 1936 by Samuel Hopkins Adams, became not only the most influential and most widely accepted history of the President and his era, but at the same time the most damning. In it myth and history seemed irretrievably fused and it appeared that unless new evidence were forthcoming, the Harding chapter would be permanently written.

In 1948 Frederick L. Paxson attempted to separate the scandals of the Harding administration from the other, often ignored areas of foreign and domestic affairs, in his Postwar Years: Normalcy, 1918-1923, but with little new evidence, he was opposed by Karl Schriftgiesser's This Was Normalcy, also published in 1948. The two volumes, although contrasted in their intent and emphasis, nevertheless combine to make the point that speculation and rumor continued to provide the foundation for much of the history of the man and his time.

Finally, more than forty years after Harding's death, the new evidence became available, when the Harding Memorial Association turned the Harding Papers over to the Ohio Historical Society, where they immediately became available for research. With the new evidence at hand substantial as it was (although its completeness is still a matter of debate), it appeared that the definitive study of Harding and his administration could be written and that controversy, scandal, and innuendo would be placed in perspective as the Harding story was recaptured from myth by history.

The first study that made use of the Harding Papers was Andrew Sinclair's The Available Man: The Life Behind the Masks of Warren Gamaliel Harding (Macmillan, New York: 1965). A political biography that makes less use of the papers than it might have, it nevertheless marks the beginning of attempts to redress the balance that had so heavily weighed against Harding in the past, insisting in the process that Harding's merits as politician and President were greater than the myth and



history of his time had supposed. Nevertheless, Sinclair's study was marred by less use of the papers than he might have made, by some rather dubious assertions (that Harding had sought the Presidency since 1912, for example, and had cleverly maneuvered himself into the nomination in 1920), and, of most importance, by the fact that all the evidence was not yet in. More of that evidence appeared, to the accompaniment of publicity, shock, and controversy, in 1964. This was the appearance of what became known as the "Carrie Philips Letters."

The Carrie Philips letters were discovered and fought over to an extent that contributed to the notoriety of their contents: a fully documented sex scandal that resurrected the old stories even while it added to them. Although ultimately closed to scholarly or other use, the fact that they exist has provided a focal point that has contributed to a controversy dramatized in the next two chapters of the Harding story.

These chapters are Francis Russell's The Shadow of Blooming Grove (McGraw-Hill, New York: 1968) and Robert K. Murray's The Harding Era (University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis: 1969). Each of the authors had seen and read the Philips letters, and, although enjoined from their quotation, each was presumably prepared to assess their worth, as well as that of the Harding Papers, and prepare a definitive statement.

Russell's book was published first, and it remains the more controversial, as much for its author's participation in the furor over the Philip letters as for its content, a study that explores the scandals in depth. Although sympathetic to Harding in tone - Russell insists that Harding was as much sinned against as a sinner - Russell resurrects as a central thesis of the book a scandal that had plagued the Harding family for more than a hundred years and that is still repeated by old men in Marion and Morrow Counties. The "Shadow of Blooming Grove" is the old rumor that insisted the Hardings had Negro blood, a rumor unverified and itself the source of a minor political scandal and mystery in the campaign of 1920. Russell's thesis insists that the persistence of this rumor alternately blighted Harding's life and drove him to succeed and dispell it.

Russell's book was questioned by professional historians - footnotes are rare - and it was officially branded as fiction by the Harding Memorial Association and condemned by members of the Ohio Historical Society as well. Heavily detailed, however, it is flawed, but it is not fiction, and its use of the Philips letters (forbidden to quote, it uses dashes in place of quotations) to shed light on Harding's political life as well as this new dimension of his personal life is new and important. Perhaps more than anything else, it demonstrates the persistence of unsubstantiated myth in the Harding story and the paucity of evidence to substantiate or refute it. The ancestry of Russell's book goes back through Adams, Allen, and White to the articles in the New Republic of 1924.

Furthermore, Russell is attacked directly by Murray in The Harding Era, a work that attempts to restore balance by examining Harding's accomplishments in foreign affairs -- the Peace Treaty with Germany and the Washington Arms Limitation pact in particular -- and in domestic affairs as well. In drawing upon the Harding Papers for much of this material, Murray demonstrates the value of their public nature. But the scandals and rumors, public and personal, persist, and Murray is unable to deny or refute them or, in the light of the Philips letters, to minimize them, although he attempts to do so. Somehow his assertions that the scandals and rumors do not reflect the true Harding would seem more persuasive were it not for such incidents in the text as his reference -- for reasons known only to himself; surely he should know better -- to Cyril Clemens as Mark Twain's son, or for the more serious omission of the vital last assertion in Dougherty's statement to the New York Grand Jury forty-three years before.

This is essentially where the Harding story stands at the moment. Other studies, most notably Randolph C. Downes's "definitive" three-volume study and Dean Albertson's "official" biography are incomplete, although



Downes has published Volume I\* but it is unlikely that either study, both of which are sympathetic to Harding, will add anything new of significance to the Harding story.\*\* Rather, as Murray and Russell make clear, only in attitudes and interpretations can modern studies differ, and in each case ancestry of the points of view are clear if sometimes less than legitimate. And rumor, innuendo, scandal, and unsubstantiated statements, leavened by the unpublished fact of the Philips letters, the stuff of which myth is made, continue to dominate the memory and biography of the twenty-eighth President of the United States. And in turn that myth suggests a great deal about the age and place that produced Warren G. Harding, and it suggests as much or more about the age of the myth-makers, an age very much alive.

\*(The Rise of Warren Gamaliel Harding, 1865- 1920, 13 Columbus, Ohio State University Press, 1970),

\*\*Two other books, both published on a subsidy basis, Vindication for Mr. Normalcy (1965) by Edwin K. Gross and The Conciliator (1969), by Dale E. Cottrill, are unabashed apologies that simply compound distortions and myth.

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Society for the Study of Midwestern  
Literature Newsletter

Volume Three, Number Two

Published at Michigan State University  
with the support of the Department of  
American Thought and Language

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Cover artist: John Antico

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May 1, 1973

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