This Newsletter is published by the Hyde Park Historical Society, a not-for-profit organization founded in 1975 to record, preserve, and promote public interest in the history of Hyde Park. Its headquarters, located in an 1893 restored cable car station at 5529 S. Lake Park Avenue, houses local exhibits. It is open to the public on Saturdays and Sundays from 2 until 4pm.

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**Art, Authorship, and Jazz Join at the Society’s Annual Dinner**

Ruth Knack presents the Marian and Leon Despres Preservation Award to Theaster Gates and the REBUILD FOUNDATION, which he directs. Gates is also director of the Arts and Public Life Initiative of the University of Chicago.

Judith Stein and Almarie Wagner receive the Society’s highest honor, the Paul Cornell Award, for advancing and promoting the Hyde Park Jazz Society. In recognition they offer the following statement:

“We are so honored to receive the 2016 Paul Cornell Award. Now on our way to the 11th year of the Hyde Park Jazz Society, founded by Jim Wagner, and approaching the 10th anniversary of the Hyde Park Jazz Festival, we marvel at the acceptance, support, and love that the greater Hyde Park community has shown for our organizations. We are proud that we have helped create opportunities for diverse audiences to attend our two-day September Festival and our weekly Sunday JAZZ at Room 43, located at 43rd & Greenwood. We hope to see many of you at 7:30pm on a jazzy Sunday evening (www.hydeparkjazzsociety.com) and on the last weekend of September, 9/24-25, for Festival #10 (www.hydeparkjazzfestival.org).”

Emcee and featured speaker Jay Mulberry

John Boyer, Dean of the College of the University of Chicago, receives the Jean Block Award for his book, *The University of Chicago, A History*, from Society President Michal Safar.
**Cyrus Was There**

By Jay Mulberry

From the cover of Baldridge’s 1918 book of the same name.

Cyrus Baldridge was greatly gifted and greatly giving. He was a world-striding adventurer in a 19th century style unknown today. He was industrious and visionary. He was practical. He was honest, honorable and good. To me and my family he was a uniquely important stranger/friend—the mystery man next door who served us martinis and crackers and talked about things we could never even imagine. In her late middle age my mother loved him and maybe he loved her. To her he was, in joking/reality, “the great man” and so was he to us all. Now, long after he is gone, I learned it slowly and am still learning. I regret all the questions I failed to ask Cyrus and

It was September, 1959, and my family was moving to Santa Fe. As the truckers unloaded our furniture I wandered about our yard; our neighbor next door was raking his driveway. That was Cyrus. After “how do you do” I was quick to let him know that in my pocket there was a ticket for a train leaving in a few days to carry me off to the University of Chicago. He let me know that 52 years before he had carried his own ticket to that same noble institution. So there’s the link. But at the time I didn’t know the University was in a place called “Hyde Park.”

Cyrus was our neighbor in Santa Fe from 1959 until his death in 1977. He and his partner, Caroline Singer, had moved there in 1952 from active and hectic lives as artist and writer in New York. The house they lived in next to ours was very simple, hardly more than a cottage, but it was filled with wonder for my “plain vanilla” family. A painting would always be on the easel in the middle of the room, and work recently finished, or unfinished, leaned against the wall. Objects from a lifetime of travel—a whole wondrous world of them—were everywhere, in their proper forms or made into ashtrays, tables and lamps. When we walked through their door we entered another world.

There was a complex history behind it all. I learned it slowly and am still learning. I regret all the questions I failed to ask Cyrus and

**Hyde Park Book Club**

The Hyde Park Book Club held its first meeting on November 16, 2015 in the lower level meeting room of Treasure Island. Local author Barry Kritzberg gave the background and history of some of his work, and read excerpts from one of his books. The group then discussed how the club would operate and came up with a somewhat novel format—each club meeting will have a Hyde Park-related theme. Members can read whatever they choose related to that theme and then share ideas at the next meeting. This proposal was greeted with enthusiasm.

On January 18, the first topic, the Leopold and Loeb case, met with lively discussion. Books read by members included *For the Thrill of It* by Simon Baatz (2008) and *Crime of the Century*, by Hal Higdon (2010). The play, *Never the Sinner*, which ran at the Victory Gardens Theater in December, received special notice. Upcoming topics include Rosalie Villa and Rosalie Buckingham, the novels of Barry Kritzberg, *The Heroines of Mercy Street* (non-fiction book about Civil War nurses), and the fictionalized TV mini-series of the same name.

The Hyde Park Book Club is sponsored jointly by the Hyde Park Historical Society and Chicago Hyde Park Village. Meetings are held the third Monday of the month in the meeting room on the lower level of Treasure Island at 7:30 PM. The next meeting will take place Monday, March 21. All are welcome.

**Answer to Mystery Quiz:**

Absolutely none. His highly touted system of direct current (DC) successfully used in New York City, was judged too expensive by Fair organizers. Instead, organizers opted to install alternating current (AC), developed by Serbian American inventor Nikola Tesla for George Westinghouse in the 1880s. When the Fair opened on May 1, 1893, at the touch of a switch, 200,000 incandescent light bulbs instantly illuminated buildings, rides, and walkways with such light as had never been seen before. A Chicago public school commemorating this great inventor stood at the corner of 67th Street and Kimbark Avenue for many years.

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

Events scheduled for the spring quarter will be announced on the Hyde Park Historical Society website or by postcard.

**Bert’s Words (Part 5)**

“God, if you wish for our love, fling us a handful of stars.” – Louis Untermeyer

“The trouble with our times is that the future is not what it used to be.” – Paul Valery

**Self portrait, 1970s. Oil painting when Baldrige was 81.**

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The Society welcomes the following new members: Sarah Diwan, G. Eccles Jones, and Rebecca Smith.

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Cyrus was a working man. For all their fabulous trips, John Dewey and Robert Maynard Hutchins spoke storm. Eventually, the Legion was successful in founding the Legion of Honor, the little book caused an enormous push. Together they published a small booklet called Race—What the Scientists Say and Freedom, led the fight to integrate the group, and foremost, rationalists to the core who didn't believe in unseen realities, or ideologies that promised an end to the world. They believed in free speech, communal action and education. (She was blind in one eye and he often read to her from the Encyclopedia Britannica. Once they undertook to master an article on differential calculus because "So many people understand it, why shouldn't we?") They were not "cause" people but they spoke out for the Legion to award advertisements and greeting cards. He did book design, set design and even made wall paper. Some commissioned work was magnificent—Translations from the Chinese by Arthur Waley, The Adventures of Marco Polo and Hajji Baba of Ispahan by James Morier may be among the most beautiful works of the 1930's and 1940's. Some were less notable, but like other men's work it had to be done steadily and without fanfare to keep the wolf from the door. Because of his travels, Cyrus became the "man to go to" for other artists: "What would a Persian woman wear on the Hajj? Is it expected for a Shite man to wear a beard?" If he didn't know, he could suggest someone who did.

Why did he "retire" in 1952 to move with Caroline to Santa Fe? I don't know. It wasn't because he was tired. In fact, his art career would have been painted every day, no exceptions. When the weather allowed, he left home to sketch in the mountains, the surrounding villages, the desert or the plains. By the time he stopped—and I'm not sure he ever did—he knew New Mexico as well as any man alive. And I don't know why he did "it." Why, on June 6, 1977 he took a kitchen chair into the driveway and shot himself in the heart with his service pistol. He was old and he wrote to his mother, "I will never return. Close your eyes. A thousand percent I am going where I said I was going. I am going. The Smithsonian reports that he did it because he had cancer. That may be, but how would they know? My mother didn't know and he shared everything with her. Well, I am sorry he is gone. I will never know another like him.

Epilogue: His will left all his paintings and his money to the University of Chicago, with the suggestion that it be used to provide annual support to African American art students. This year, beginning in June and lasting for ten weeks, there will be an exhibit of the work Cyrus gave the University Regenstein Library in its Department of Special Collections. I hope you can come, All of Baldridge's books are available through Amazon, called BE.com, in many cases cheaper than when they were new.

More information about Cyrus Baldridge can be found on the web at http://tinyurl.com/CyrusLivelyBaldridge

Mystery Quiz:
What role did Thomas Edison play in the electrification of the World Columbian Exposition of 1893?

In the brief two years that Cyrus had with Holme, he found a father figure, and apparently Holme found a son. But Holme was dying of TB. Cyrus was with him only two years before he left for Arizona looking for the "cure" in its warm, dry air. The two kept in contact through letters now housed at the University of Arizona, Holme's death came as a crushing shock since he had never let Cyrus know just how serious things were.

"One gray dawn in 1904, I knelt (in the train yard) and broke open the bundle of newspapers. Upon a front page was the face of Frank Holme. My friend was dead in Arizona. . . . So this was why my letter remained unanswered."
with the Red Cross. They were perfectly matched—both independent, footloose, and curious. She was married, and it took a while to sort that out. Cur- lose from the *Stars and Stripes* he went his way—to China (“if there were any place where one could escape from all thoughts of war it would be China”) while she went home to San Francisco. Somehow they became a couple. That they were not married was known to few. One who learned after both were dead could only say “but they were the most married couple I ever saw.”

The two set up housekeeping in New York with the understanding that “every two years, no matter what we may be doing and whether we have any funds or not, we are to knock off and spend a year traveling.” And so they did, for much of the next 30 years. They traveled far, they traveled light and, mostly, they traveled poor.

Their great book *Turn to the East* was published in 1924 after one of their “off” years. They took off for the Far East.

The trip reshaped both Cyrus’ style and his purpose as an artist. Following Frank Holme’s motto: “Show it in a few bold strokes” he had drawn the soldiers of the AEF and illustrated “chalk talks” that helped pay his way through the University of Chicago. Holme’s advice had been practical.

But in Asia he found that a great artist with a single line could tell a story, or mesmerize a listener with a single note. A single gesture could open a world of pleasure or pain:

“One slow gesture, sharp as a cry in the silence. In that moment lives the whole span of a woman’s existence, sorrows with a penit- up intensity from, which I can never altogether recover.”

and, of his friend and master Takeuchi Seijo:

“He chose a brush and poised his hand. A few swift strokes. Across one fan spread a stalk of bamboo, silo, quivering in the wind.”

Frank Holme’s instruction presented far deeper challenges and resonated more than he had realized. Cyrus visited

China, with and without Caroline, three times. He was there in a chaotic period when warlords gained great power, then lost it, overnight. They lived for at time in concubine quarters of a warlord’s estate in Peking. During their stay, Peking was reoccupied twice more by different warlords, and by order of the second, “the Christian general,” they had to move on.

In China, Cyrus made hundreds of sketches, and met everyone from poor farmers and street hawkers to generals, industrialists and white “China hands.” Fresh in his mind were the artistic insights he had made in Japan. He began to catch the spirit and not only the image of what he saw around him, “I have discovered that no artist can interpret his model without understanding the background of which the model is part.” he said.

Struck by the patience of the Chinese, and their forbearance with human frailties, he was nevertheless repelled by what he saw as their narrow sense of social concern. Reflecting on this in 1947 Baldridge wrote a prophetic warning:

“If post-war China borrows Western industrialization without the West’s mitigating social concept, the result could be one of mankind’s blackest chapters.”

In the end Cyrus and Caroline felt they had to leave. They had seen too much suffering and they were falling victim to self-protective apathy. “The time to touch home base had come—we were becoming acclimated to misery.”

In 1926 the couple reached another “take off” time. For 13 months, on foot, tramp steamers and whatever-means-possible, they made their way from Sierra Leone to the Congo River and then north to Ethiopia. Along the way they lived in native villages where Baldridge sketched and communicated with the Africans through pictures. They traveled light, he in a golf cap and she in anything comfortable. With no pith helmets, no guns, never taking advantage of the privileges easily available to those with white skins, they made their way through the steaming heart of what was then truly called “the white man’s graveyard.”

And, it must not be forgotten that for a white woman to make that trip at that time was something close to apostasy.

The magnificent book that came from this was named *White Africans and Black* to challenge the view of whites that the people of color around them came from a continent of primitive people, homogeneous in color and culture. This was a breakthrough in 1928 and one African American reviewer described his work as “the raw symphony with which Baldridge handles subjects usually treated as savages that make this collection unique and valuable.” Charles Johnson, President of Fisk University, called the pictures “the best representation available of African Life.”

There was more to come: India, Pakistan, Iraq, Persia among them. Half the World is Ishban, again written by Caroline while designed and extravagantly illustrated by Cyrus, is one of the most beautiful travel books ever written. And, it came about when they believed that Caroline was dying:

“[Caroline’s] health was deteriorating day by day. Why should she Waste away, futilely waiting. Medical science impotent to accomplish more, let us at least have one grand spree together. Perhaps a trip to Persia.”

The book is filled with discovery and adventure. The sands were virtually roadless. In places the people were sullen and dangerous, in others giving and delightful. In Meshed Cyrus was surrounded by a crowd of men and nearly stoned for sketching a mosque—an affront to fundamentalists. The two watched *The Merchant*