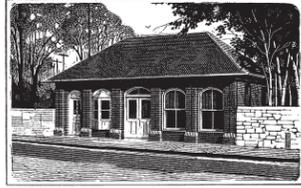


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Hyde Park History

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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.



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.



Emcee and featured speaker Jay Mulberry

PHOTOS / MARC MONAGHAN

Hyde Park Historical Society

COLLECTING AND PRESERVING HYDE PARK'S HISTORY

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Enclosed is my new renewal membership
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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.

Web site: hydeparkhistory.org
 Telephone: **HY3-1893**

President: **Michal Safar**
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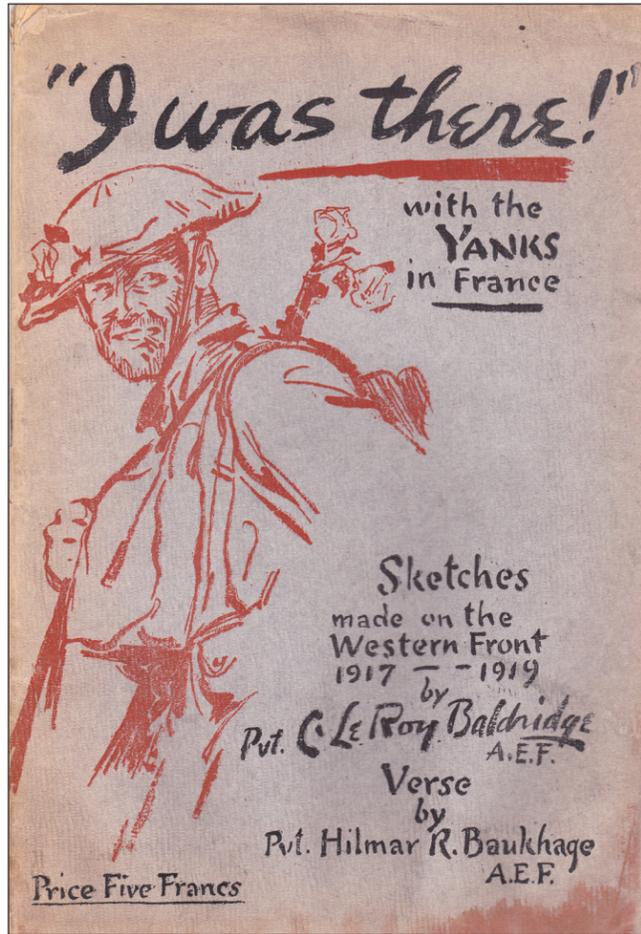


Judith Stein and Almarie Wagner receive the Society's highest honor, the Paul Cornell Award, for advancing and promoting the Hyde Park Jazz Society. In recognition they offer the following statement:

"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)."

Cyrus Was There

By Jay Mulberry



From the cover of Baldrige's 1918 book of the same name.

Cyrus Baldrige 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 read a little and talk a little and write a little about him.

But that has nothing to do with Hyde Park (be warned, very little will.) The Baldrige/Chicago link is the University of Chicago and that was fortunate for me.

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 walls. 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



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

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 Krtizberg 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 Krtizberg, *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*



Andy Carter, Barbara Havens, and Sharon Huntersmith (with guitar at right) perform at the Society's annual party on December 12. Vocalist Sara Trumm is out of sight behind Andy.

New Members

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

◀5 of Venice performed in an abandoned Baha'i temple with an Armenian Portia. Caroline helped a nervous provincial governor set up a room for Rabindranath Tagore who was about to visit. And Cyrus drew the last sketch ever made of Persia's atrocious ruler Reza Shah Pahlavi. (He had made the first official sketch of Emperor Haile Selassie while in Africa.)

But rich as the book is in recording the ways of the Middle East, nothing tells more about the ways of its authors than that line I quoted above: "Let us at least have one grand spree together. Perhaps a trip to Persia." Who else have I ever met like them?

With all that art and all that travel, Caroline and Cyrus may sound quite exotic. They weren't. They traveled because they had a wanderlust and they were curious about everything. But they were, first and foremost, rationalists to the core who didn't believe in unseen realities, or ideologies that promised an end to evils of 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 *Encyclopaedia 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 clearly on issues of peace, imperialism, feminism and equality. Close friends of some African Americans, they distrusted white people who made a cause of being friends. Both were regular contributors to the Urban League's *Opportunity Magazine*, Cyrus illustrated books by African Americans, and Caroline, a leader in Jane Addam's International League of Peace and Freedom, led the fight to integrate the group, something Jane Addams approved but had never pushed. Together they published a small booklet called *Race—What the Scientists Say* which was aimed against the growing power of American fascists and their racist ideology.

For six years, Cyrus was commander of the Willard Straight Post of the American Legion, the only liberal post in America. In 1936 he wrote a tiny booklet, *Americanism—What Is It?* for the Legion to award high school graduates with their diplomas. Though carefully worded, with everything in it traced to the Founding Fathers, the little book caused an enormous storm. Eventually, the Legion was successful in banning it, but not before the likes of Roger Baldwin, John Dewey and Robert Maynard Hutchins spoke in its defense, and the entire text was read into the Congressional Record. Baldrige remained as proud of that effort as anything he had ever done.

Oh! I seem to have forgotten to mention that Cyrus was a working man. For all their fabulous trips, someone had to pay and Cyrus did that by drawing

hundreds of illustrations for books, magazine articles, 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 Isfahan* 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 Shiite 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 New Mexico for almost twenty years he 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 very old and he wrote to my mother, "I will never be 90% again," which, between them, meant that he was failing. 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 in Regenstein Library in its Department of Special Collections. I hope you can come.

All of Baldrige's books are available through Amazon.com or ABE.com, in many cases cheaper than when they were new.

More information about Cyrus Baldrige can be found on the web at <http://tinyurl.com/CyrusLeroyBaldrige>

HPHS

Caroline. Over the years I have put together a more complete picture.

Cyrus' youth was the kind that has excused many failed lives but in this case a childhood of poverty and wild instability nurtured a man who was independent, fearless and steady as a rock—all because of that amazing mother!

Charity Eliza Burgdorf Baldrige was a poor young girl who married a wealthy man who proved to be no good. She spent three years with him in Florida, trying to run his orange grove while he was hunting and drinking, but in 1893 she had had enough. While he was out and about, she sold his land, put his half of the money on the dinner table and left with the 3-year-old Cyrus to travel across the country from Florida to Oregon where a favorite uncle had promised her a job. Promise broken, Cyrus and his mother were on their own. For the next 6 years they traveled constantly from one town to another as Charity Eliza made a living, barely, selling kitchenware from house to house, sewing and working in shops. It was deep poverty though Cyrus called it more gently "a life of depots and day coaches."

"Home was a day coach in which my mother taught me the multiplication tables. As bleak fields or the middens and shabby fringes of towns slid past my eyes, I fitted the tables into the rhythm of the train."

No father, no stability, hunger, cold and danger was training for the man who later raced killers across an untracked desert in Iraq and smuggled gold to revolutionaries in Korea.

Eventually Cyrus' mother made arrangements for him to stay with a Scottish family in Chicago while she was away on the road. He was 9 years old and had attended 13 schools in 18 states. That would not do. He needed a real education. And, since Charity Eliza was aware of his artistic talent, she persuaded Frank Holme to register Cyrus in Holme's School of Illustration. The nine-year-old attended public school until noon each day, and then went to the Loop (hidden on the back of some convenient wagon) for the only formal art training he ever had. At Holme's school, Cyrus joined the adult students to draw nude models, examine cadavers, and sketch the life on the streets.

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 last letter remained unanswered."

Cyrus Baldrige entered the University of Chicago as a freshman in 1907, though "my twenty-one schools had encumbered me with little formal education." With no scholarship, he found an unheated attic room to stay in and proceeded to work his way through college, making posters, serving tables, acting in vaudeville, tutoring and managing an undergraduate dorm. He became president of Reynolds Club, editor of the yearbook, a singer in the Blackfriars, a cheerleader, captain of the fencing team, member of the committee for election of Charles Merriam as Mayor of Chicago, chairman of social service committee and participant in Mary McDowell's settlement house. At last, as Grand Marshall, he led the Class of 1911 as they marched to receive their diplomas. (I have the baton he carried!)

He had been a "Big Man on Campus" in every way, but to understand him it is more important to take in what his close friend and classmate Harry Hansen said:

"Men who knew Baldrige will talk about him by the hour. . . . They will tell you about his honesty, his candor, his sense of democracy, his unfailing humor and his faith in his fellow men."

That is the Cyrus Baldrige I remember.

From here on my problem gets hard. What to include from a life so full? Work scratching out pictures of cart wheels and refrigerators in his first jobs? His months as a cowboy on the King Ranch in Texas? Should I tell you that he was in the cavalry on the border of Mexico when Pancho Villa invaded New Mexico? Of his trying (and failing) his first sexual encounter in "Levee," Chicago's lawless land of prostitution, gambling and crime?

I'll have to stick to the big ones.

Baldrige's fame as an artist came with World War I. In 1914, almost on a lark, he took off for German- ▶4



Caroline Singer 1925. Dry point.

◀③ occupied Belgium and his sketches began to appear frequently in Schribner's Magazine and Leslie's Weekly. There were lots of illustrators working the war beat but not many at the front, much less behind the German lines. He began to get a "Name."

What had been "almost a lark" turned his life around. "He came home loathing war, and fiery with the knowledge that he must do something about it," wrote a friend. For the time being, "doing something about it" meant joining the French Army as a truck driver. But when the Americans entered the War in 1917, he was transferred to our army and made chief illustrator for the doughboy's paper, the *Stars and Stripes*. His pictures appeared in nearly every issue, reaching some 500,000 soldiers weekly and making him one of the best known illustrators in America. The publication of his first book, *I Was There – with the Yanks in France* was successful, but he was shaken and unsure. The War had changed him. "I lived with death," he said. "The reality of battle cannot be described. It is understood only by those who have killed men with knives."

In war time, Baldrige met Caroline Singer, a newspaper writer from San Francisco on leave to work

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. Cut loose from the *Stars and Stripes* he went his way – to China ("if there were any place where one could escape from all thought 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 pent-up intensity from, which I can never altogether recover."

and, of his friend and master Takeuchi Seijo:



Woman from Sierra Leone, 1928

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

Frank Holme's instruction presented far deeper challenges and rewards 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.

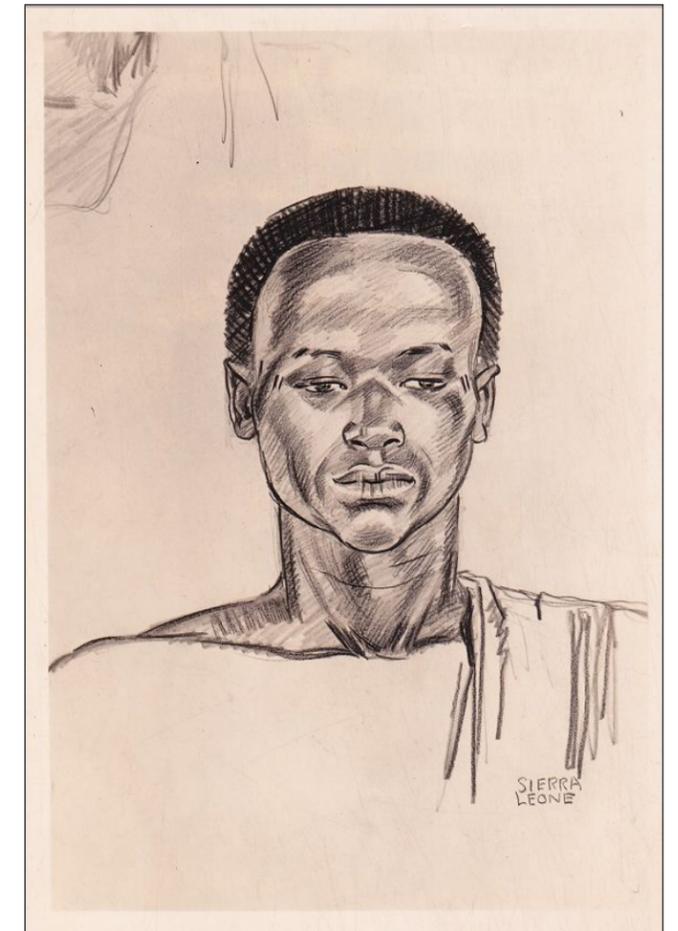
Struck by the patience of the Chinese, and their forbearance with human frailties, he was nevertheless repelled by what he saw as their narrow sense of social concern. Reflecting on this in 1947 Baldrige wrote a prophetic warning:

"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 Baldrige 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 rare symphony with which Baldrige handles subjects usually treated as savages that make this collection unique



Man from Sierra Leone. Original is part of Baldrige Collection at Fisk University.

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 Isfahan*, 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* ▶⑥