

FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD

This edition of *Notes* gives me an opportunity to thank you for your loyal membership and support. Whatever your particular interests, I hope you have found our collection, services, and programs to be of the highest standard. That is our goal.

It is gratifying to see that the Library is so well used and appreciated. Our events are well attended, the fifth-floor writing facilities are in high demand, and members of all ages continue to enjoy our unique resources. The open stacks, electronic resources, vibrant children's programs, beautiful Members' Room, and the Peluso Family Exhibition Gallery enhanced by the stunning skylight—all continue to make the Society Library a delightful and enriching experience.

It is equally gratifying that so many of our members express their appreciation through generous giving. This issue of our newsletter highlights those individuals and foundations that contributed to the Library in 2011. Many of you have supported the Library for decades; others, for the first time last year. A significant number gave tribute gifts in honor or in memory of a loved one or friend, and several families established book funds to commemorate a special occasion. You can read about some of our foundation grants in a separate article. We make every effort to maximize the impact of each donation with careful planning and prudent spending.

On behalf of the Trustees and staff of the New York Society Library, I wish to express our sincere gratitude for all of these contributions.

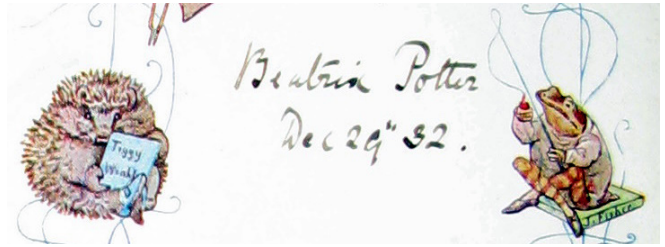
Sincerely,



Charles G. Berry
Chairman of the Board

RECENT GIFTS

The small exhibition case at the bottom of the stairs on the second floor houses two remarkable books from the Library's collection: a first edition of Beatrix Potter's beloved classic *The Tale of Jemima Puddle-Duck*, signed by Potter herself (London: Frederick Warne, 1908), and a copy of J.R.R. Tolkien's standard-bearer for children's fantasy, *The Hobbit, or There and Back Again* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1956), also signed by the author. With their distinct bindings and now iconic endpapers—illustrated by their respective authors—these books strongly demonstrate that books can be beautiful objects in and of themselves. Both these unique items were generously donated by Romano I. Peluso, an avid reader and book collector. They were part of a large donation of 102 rare and remarkable books, of which most are first editions and 96 are signed, made by Mr. Peluso in 2010. Among the full set are works by Theodore Roosevelt, Edward Albee, Arthur Miller, Eugene O'Neill, Wendy Wasserstein, David Halberstam, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, Graham Greene, Horton Foote, and a substantial selection of works by Virginia Woolf and J.K. Rowling. Anyone interested in seeing a full list of Mr. Peluso's donations can search for "Peluso Family Collection" in the Library's online catalog.



Donor Romano I. Peluso

In other news of recent gifts, member Jane Block donated two books, Francis Turner Palgrave's *A Golden Treasury of Songs and Lyrics* (New York: Duffield and Company, 1911) and Washington Irving's *The Complete Poetical Works of Oliver Wendell Holmes* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1887). Both of these feature illustrations by Maxfield Parrish, himself a member of the Library. Dr. Pierre van Goethem donated a signed first edition of *Avedon Photographs: 1947-1977* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1978), a collection of stunning photographs by the American photographer Richard Avedon, which was published concurrently with the opening of an Avedon retrospective at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Longtime member and architectural historian Henry Hope Reed donated an edition of James Fenimore Cooper's *Notions of the Americans* (Philadelphia: Carey, Lea, & Blanchard, 1835) last year. This will complement our other early editions of American author Cooper, an ancestor of Library Trustee Henry S.F. Cooper Jr. We thank these members and all others who have donated volumes to the Library in recent years.

OFF THE SHELF: A READER'S REVIEW

A VISIT TO THE WORLD OF *DOWNTON ABBEY*

by Andrew Corbin, Acquisitions and Reference Librarian

From 1971 to 1975 American television viewers were in thrall to *Upstairs, Downstairs*, a British drama about the Bellamys, a wealthy family in Edwardian London, and the many servants who kept their Belgravia mansion running smoothly. In much the same fashion, audiences worldwide have fallen under the spell of a new series about the life of a grand English home, this time the North Yorkshire estate of the Earl of Grantham. Now in its second season, *Downton Abbey* is a tremendous success for PBS; the premier of the second season drew an estimated 4.2 million viewers. It would seem that Americans just can't get enough of the doings of the Earl of Grantham and his family and servants. To that end, a great many articles have appeared outlining reading programs for people who want to deepen their enjoyment of this richly entertaining saga. The Library would like to add to this growing body of *Downton Abbey*-related literature by suggesting some books from our collection.

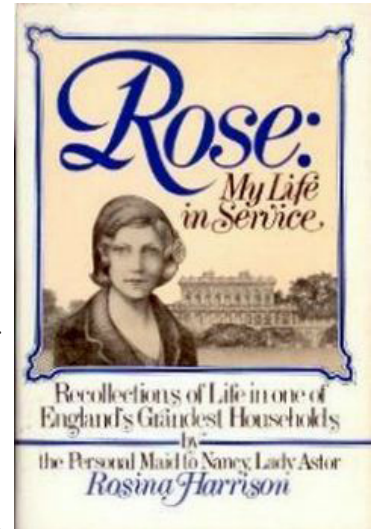
LIFE "BELOW STAIRS"

A major part of *Downton Abbey's* appeal must surely reside in the glimpse it offers viewers of two very different yet interdependent worlds, that of the aristocracy and the one "below stairs." Anyone wishing to flesh out their understanding of characters like Carson the butler, Hughes the housekeeper, Bates the valet, Thomas the footman, and Anna the housemaid should consider reading either of the following firsthand accounts of what it was like to be a servant in an aristocratic household: *Rose* (New York: Viking, 1975), Rosina Harrison's wonderfully entertaining memoir of her time as personal maid to Nancy Lady Astor, or Eric Horne's idiosyncratic but winning *What the Butler Winked At* (London: T. Werner Laurie, Ltd., 1923). The most popular of these memoirs, cited by *Downton Abbey* creator Julian Fellowes as a major source of inspiration for the series, is undoubtedly *Below Stairs* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1970), written by former kitchen maid Margaret Powell.

Readers interested in digging a little deeper into the particulars of life in service should seek out the following more scholarly titles: Frank Dawes's *Not in Front of the Servants* (New York: Taplinger, 1974), Adeline Hartcup's *Below Stairs in the Great Country Houses* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1985), Pamela Horn's *The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Servant* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1975), and Frank E. Huggett's *Life Below Stairs* (New York: Scribner, 1977). Finally, Jeremy Musson's *Up and Down Stairs* is a comprehensive and eminently readable history of the English country house servant from the Middle Ages to the late twentieth century (London: John Murray, 2010).

WORLD WAR I (THE GREAT WAR)

While the focus of *Downton Abbey's* first season was on the affairs of the great estate itself, the shadow of the First World War hangs heavily over season two. There is no shortage of books in the Library's collection on this cataclysmic event. If we were to recommend just one general history, it would likely be John Keegan's monumental and definitive *The First World War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999). Another notable book on the subject is Paul Fussell's National Book Award-winning *The Great War and Modern Memory* (New York: Sterling, 2009). Originally published in 1974, this magisterial and immensely moving work explores the different ways in which a generation of writers tried to make sense of and express the unprecedented brutality and horror they were experiencing as soldiers. Notable among this generation were Wilfred Owen, whose *Collected Poems* (New York: New Directions, 1964) contains what is perhaps his most famous war poem, "*Dulce et Decorum est*," and Robert Graves, whose memoir *Good-bye to All That* (New York: Blue Ribbon Books, 1930) is a vivid and terrifying account of trench warfare and the psychological damage it inflicted on the survivors. Pat Barker's monumental *Regeneration Trilogy* is one of the most harrowing and highly regarded fictional treatments of the War: *Regeneration* (New York: Dutton, 1992), *The Eye in the Door* (New York: Dutton, 1994), and Booker Award-winning *The Ghost Road* (New York: Dutton, 1996). The characters are based on real-life figures like Wilfred Owen, Siegfried Sassoon, and W.H.R. Rivers, the army doctor who pioneered the study of shell-shocked soldiers, and focus largely on the War's legacy of



Wilfred Owen

psychological trauma.

LOVE AND MARRIAGE

As is revealed early in the first season of *Downton Abbey*, the estate came perilously close to financial ruin until the current Earl of Grantham married a very wealthy American heiress. Luckily for both Cora and her impecunious but aristocratic new husband, what may have begun as a marriage based on financial need quickly turned into a genuinely happy romantic union. There is an excellent book on this very subject—American heiresses marrying into the English aristocracy during the Victorian and Edwardian eras—that series creator Julian Fellowes has often cited as a major influence on his work: *To Marry an English Lord* by Gail MacColl and Carol McD. Wallace (New York: Workman, 1989). One of the real-life inspirations for Cora Grantham was Lady Almina, the daughter of American industrialist Alfred de Rothschild and the fifth Countess of Carnarvon. A biography of Lady Almina written by the current Countess of Carnarvon has recently been published, detailing all of this extraordinary woman's life, including her decision to turn Highclere Castle (where most of *Downton Abbey* is actually filmed) into a hospital for wounded soldiers during World War I: *Lady Almina and the Real Downton Abbey* by the Countess of Carnarvon (New York: Broadway Books, 2012). One work of fiction that speaks directly to *Downton Abbey* is Edith Wharton's *The Buccaneers*, a novel she left unfinished at the time of her death in 1937 but which was completed by Marion Mainwaring in 1993 (New York: Viking, 1993). The story of five American girls from newly wealthy families who travel to England in search of husbands, *The Buccaneers* is a sharp and often romantic story about women much like Cora Grantham, women whose money makes them very attractive indeed to needy aristocrats.



Lady Almina

Finally, we would be remiss if we did not mention the two frothy and witty novels penned by *Downton Abbey* creator Julian Fellowes: *Snobs* (New York: St. Martin's, 2005) and *Past Imperfect* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2008), as well as Jessica Fellowes's *The World of Downton Abbey*. Written by Julian's niece, this companion volume is a lavish treat for *Downton* enthusiasts and an excellent general introduction to life in the Edwardian world, generously illustrated with both period photos and pictures taken on the film set.

FOUNDATIONS MAKING A DIFFERENCE

The Library has been very fortunate to receive grants from a number of foundations in the past few years. These grants provide critical support for special projects requiring additional funds due to budget constraints. We gratefully acknowledge the foundations that generously funded the Library in 2011. **The Gladys Kriebel Delmas Foundation**, **Newman's Own Foundation**, and the **Peter Jay Sharp Foundation** all supported the first phase of a major project to transcribe and analyze the Library's Second Charging Ledger (1799-1805). **The Achelis Foundation** is supporting the upcoming exhibition *Edith Wharton's New York City: A Backward Glance*, and **The Frelinghuysen Foundation** has helped to establish a new Exhibition Fund. The Library is proud to be the recipient of these generous grants.

WELCOME TO NEW STAFF

The last couple of months have seen three additions and changes to the staff.

Katie Fricas joined us as a page in September 2010 and has served patrons at the circulation desk since September 2011, but as of January 31 she splits her full-time position between the Circulation and Events departments. For those who enjoy our many adult events, Katie will now be answering the main events phone line (212-288-6900 x230) and will help to staff events. With a BA from Rutgers University in Gender Studies and English Literature, Katie is also a published cartoonist and illustrator.

Casey O'Rourke joined the staff on February 1 as a part-time Circulation Assistant. He graduated from the University of Tulsa in 2010. Among other library-related activities, Casey coordinated the Bryant Park Reading Room in 2011.

Caitlin McCarthy became a Bibliographic Assistant in the Cataloging department at the beginning of this year and will work on the Second Charging Ledger project. She has previously worked for *Critics & Writers* and as an archivist in the Lewis & Clark College Library Special Collections.

THE NEW YORK SOCIETY LIBRARY
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This newsletter is available
in electronic form
at www.nysoclib.org/notes.html

The New York Society Library

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FEATURES

WHAT WE READ IN 2011

A lot of great discussion was heard at the circulation desk about these most popular titles of last year. They include fiction and nonfiction, award-winning books and items especially characteristic of our community of book-lovers.

Stacy Schiff, *Cleopatra: A Life*

Erik Larson, *In the Garden of Beasts: Love, Terror, and an American Family in Hitler's Berlin*

Téa Obrecht, *The Tiger's Wife: A Novel*

David G. McCullough, *The Greater Journey: Americans in Paris*

Paula McLain, *The Paris Wife: A Novel*

David Grossman, *To the End of the Land*

Edmund De Waal, *The Hare with Amber Eyes: A Family's Century of Art and Loss*

Abraham Verghese, *Cutting for Stone*

Donna Leon, *Drawing Conclusions: A Commissario Guido Brunetti Mystery*

Jennifer Egan, *A Visit from the Goon Squad*

Steve Martin, *An Object of Beauty: A Novel*

Henning Mankell, *The Troubled Man: A Kurt Wallander Novel*

Jonathan Franzen, *Freedom: A Novel*

Laura Hillenbrand, *Unbroken: A World War II Story of Survival, Resilience, and Redemption*

Michael Holroyd, *A Book of Secrets: Illegitimate Daughters, Absent Fathers*

Howard Jacobson, *The Finkler Question*

Nicole Krauss, *Great House*

Nora Ephron, *I Remember Nothing: And Other Reflections*

