



FRIENDS OF AMERICAN WRITERS



DECEMBER
2013-2014 NUMBER 4

CHICAGO

www.fawchicago.org

THE FORTNIGHTLY CLUB
OF CHICAGO
120 E. BELLEVUE PLACE

President's Message

CHRISTINE BERN, *President*

THE WONDERFUL spirit of the holiday season will overwhelm FAW at our December meeting with the Sounds of Sweetness, an all male choir from Walter Payton College Prep High School. This program and the holiday tea are a departure from our usual literary program and The Fortnightly's typical culinary excellence. Please note that the December meeting is on Thursday, December 19. A date variation may cause a problem for some members, but may be a welcome opportunity to invite guests that are not able to attend Wednesday meetings.

Our Nominating Committee will begin to put the 2014-15 Board together in January. If you are interested in filling one of the five positions open for next year, please contact Carol Eshaghy, Roberta Gates, Shirley Baugher, Marion Sherlock or Sarah Gajak. 

Sounds of Sweetness to Serenade Us at Holiday Tea on December 19

ROBERTA GATES, *Program Chair*



▲ Anthony Case Charletta, Isaac Schwartz, Aaron Kamel, Donald Riddle, Jacob Guitarman Turner, Jonathan Switzer, Erick Masias, Daniel Wu, Raphaël Lifes Good, Alex Gee, Mitch Laski and Sergio Hernandez.

Please join us for our Holiday Tea on Thursday, December 19 when the Sounds of Sweetness, an a Cappella ensemble from nearby Walter Payton College Prep High School, will be performing for us at noon.

These 23 young men will help us welcome in the holidays by singing a wide variety of numbers, ranging from "The Christmas Song" and "Rudolph" to "Little Saint Nick" by the Beach Boys, as well as some contemporary a Cappella arrangements by the famous group "Straight No Chaser."

The Sounds of Sweetness, established in 2001, enjoys a stellar reputation in the Chicago area and beyond, having performed in the past at the United Center, the Capitol Building in Washington, D.C., and on the flight deck of the U.S.S. Intrepid in New York Harbor. They recently sang at the Museum of Science and Industry and will be appearing in various locations during the holiday season, including the Leo Burnett Building and the Lobby of 500 West Monroe. And on December 7, the group will be recording its first-ever holiday CD!

Kathleen Johnston, the director, could not be more enthusiastic about working with this talented group of young men. "I know you will be charmed," she says. "They are truly wonderful."

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Walter Payton College Prep is named one of the country's top 100 high schools by *U.S. News and World Report* and one of the top 50 by *Newsweek*. Walter Payton can be proud of an average ACT score of 28.3 and a college attendance rate of 98 percent.

It is truly our pleasure to welcome the Sounds of Sweetness to our Holiday Tea, and we know you won't want to miss it. (But be sure to come a little early as the program will start promptly at noon with the tea to follow.)

Every second Wednesday from September through May, FAW members walk through the stately doors of the Bryan Lathrop House at 120 E. Bellevue Place. While we never cease to be impressed by the beauty of the magnificent old home, how many of us really know about its architectural significance or the place that it occupies in the history of Chicago? Let's take a step back in time, to the beginning of what is now the home of the Fortnightly.

The Lathrop House from Lake Shore Drive

In the summer of 1892, the world's attention was drawn to Chicago and the upcoming World's Columbian Exposition. 1892 was the same year that Bryan Lathrop, a man who came to Chicago in 1865 and made a killing in the city's booming real estate market, built an atypical mansion on the city's north side. A Virginian by birth, Lathrop had lived in Europe during the Civil War years. He was educated in France and Germany by private tutors. Once the conflict was over, Lathrop returned to the United States. Instead of going back to Virginia, he joined his uncle, Thomas Bryan, in Chicago and became a partner in Bryan's lucrative real estate business. He immediately became involved in one of his uncle's investments: a cemetery to be located in the city's hinterlands. He oversaw plans to transform a large 120-acre tract of sand and scrub into a park-like setting which would

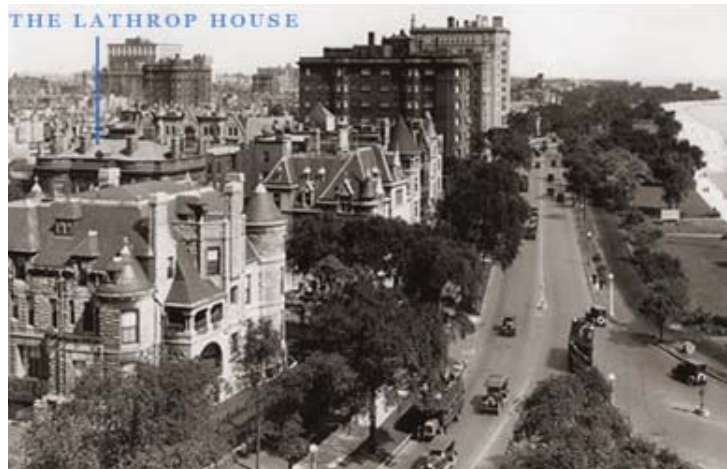


SHIRLEY BAUGHER, *Editor*

serve as a final resting place for Chicago's rich and famous. It became known as Graceland.

The chief architects for the project were William LeBaron Jenny and a young man named Ossie Simonds, the partner of William Holabird. Lathrop met Holabird through Simonds and the two formed one of the most groundbreaking, produc-

tive, landmark-making building partnerships in Chicago history, a partnership that made Lathrop a very rich man. Joining them later was Owen Aldis of Boston, whose sister Helen was married to Lathrop. Aldis, who represented a number of wealthy clients who were investing in Chicago real estate, moved



to Chicago to keep a closer eye on his clients' money.

When Lathrop decided to build his mansion at 120 E. Bellevue Place, it was assumed he would select Holabird & Roche as his architects. Instead, he chose the New York firm of Charles McKim, whom he had met when he was working on plans for the World's Fair. McKim's influence was evident in a number of the structures at the Columbian Exposition, including: the huge Agricultural Building, the exquisite New York State Building, and the Court of Honor—the central point of the fairgrounds. While Holabird & Roche were well known for their commercial buildings, their residential work was considered average.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

December Tea

Following last year's successful outing, our December meeting, to be held on Thursday, December 19, will be a holiday tea, rather than a luncheon. The performance by the "Sounds of Sweetness" will take place at 12:00 noon. Tea service will begin at 1:00 p.m. Reservations for the tea are due no later than Sunday, December 15, at 6:00 p.m. To reserve, please call only Pat Adelberg, 847-588-0911 or Lorraine Campione, 773-275-5118. The cost is \$40, payable by check to FAW. Please pay at the reception desk in the lobby on the day of the event. Do not mail checks in advance. If you wish to sit with friends, Please inform Pat or Lorraine.

If you are reserving for a group, we ask that only one person make the group request to avoid confusion.

If you make a reservation and find that you cannot attend, you must cancel no later than 6:00 p.m. on Sunday, December 15. Reservations not cancelled must be paid for by the member.

For those of you who regularly attend the FAW luncheons, it would greatly help Pat and Lorraine if you would consider making a standing reservation. They would have fewer requests to deal with at the last minute. You can always cancel if you find you will be unable to attend.

Welcome to New Members


We are pleased to announce that several new members have joined the Friends of American Writ-

ers, bringing our membership to 117. They are:

- Kay H. Doyle, 1336 Kenilwood Lane, Riverwoods, IL
- Patricia Mose, 400 Avinger #307, Davidson, N. C. 28036
- Susan Bennett, 25 W. Superior St. #2001, Chicago, IL 60611
- Laurie Drew, 3151 N. Lincoln Ave. #609, Chicago, IL 60657
- Noelle Repetto, 2954-C S. Michigan Ave, Chicago, IL 60616
- Karen Strizak, 1422 N. LaSalle Blvd. PH2, Chicago, IL 60610
- Karen R. Burnett, 200 E. Pearson #6E Chicago, IL
- Drenda Cass, 930 N. Clark St. Unit L, Chicago, IL 60610
- Sherry Middlemas, 1211 S. Prairie Ave. #901, 60605

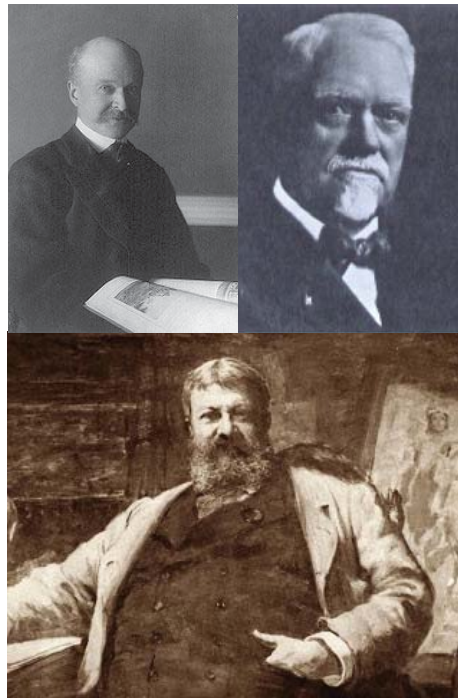
Welcome to you all.

Foundation Fund Needs Your Support

We encourage our members to contribute to the FAW Foundation Fund, a permanent fund maintained by gifts and bequests from members and friends. The fund is used to support the scholarship program which encourages high standards and promotes literary ideals among American writers. This year, recipients from National Louis University and Roosevelt University were beneficiaries. FAW members may donate to this fund at any time. A donor giving \$100 or more will be listed in the yearbook as a Foundation Fund Contributor; but contributions of any amount are welcome and the contributor will be recognized in the newsletter. 



Even if the proposed Lathrop mansion, one of three Gold Coast residences at Bellevue Place and Lakeshore Drive (the others belonging to Edith Rockefeller McCormick and William Borden), was not destined to be the home of an important Chicagoan, it would still be of great interest as the work of Charles McKim, one of the greatest architects of his time. His firm boasted some of the richest and most influential clientele in America. The group was responsible for the restoration of the White House in Washington, D.C., the Morgan Library in



◀ Clockwise from top left: Charles F. McKim, William Holabird, Henry H. Richardson

New York, and the Boston Public Library, as well as many prestigious banks and private residences. One prominent American architect said of him and his partner, Henry H. Richardson "...no other men have so deeply influenced the practice of architecture in America." For the Lathrop House, McKim created a Georgian Revival design whose clean, elegant, and understated lines stood out among the French chateau, Richardson Romanesque, and heavily rusticated stone homes that dominated the Gold Coast neighborhood.

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Top to bottom: The Lathrop House blueprint, Lathrop House interior 1893, Art Institute catalogue of Whistler etchings, The Bryan Lathrop House, 120 E. Bellevue Place ▶

The Lathrop House, arguably the most perfect piece of Georgian architecture in the City of Chicago, was completed in 1892, one year before the opening of the Columbian Exposition in Chicago. The house, which is unusually wide, has gently curving bays at each end. The symmetry is broken only by the off-center placement of the door. During the years Lathrop and his wife, Helen Lynde Aldis, occupied the residence, Lathrop became one of the city's greatest cultural benefactors. He was an early trustee of both the Art Institute, the Chicago Orchestral Association, and of the Newberry Library. More than any other individual, Lathrop was responsible for building Orchestra Hall. In his will, he left \$700,000 to the Orchestral Association, which maintains the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. He served on the Lincoln Park Board of Directors in 1901 and supervised the northward extension of the park.

Bryan and Helen's trend-setting house was a gathering place for many distinguished persons, including Mr. Lathrop's brother-in-law and sister, Ambassador and Mrs. Thomas Nelson Page. It gained even greater renown for its collection of original Whistler etchings, said to be the largest in the United States and now a permanent exhibit at the Art Institute.

Bryan Lathrop died in 1916. Six years later, Helen sold the mansion to a socially prominent women's organization, The Fortnightly,



CATALOGUE OF THE BRYAN LATHROP COLLECTION OF ETCHINGS AND LITHOGRAPHS BY JAMES MCNEILL WHISTLER: EXHIBITED AT THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO, MARCH 12 TO MAY 1, 1917



of which Helen had been a member for 40 years. Started in 1873 by Kate Newell Doggett, the Fortnightly was a meeting place for women who were interested in socially progressive thinking, especially women's suffrage, and literature. The Fortnightly's membership included a number of artists, writers and musicians as well as patrons of the arts, notably Jane Addams and Bertha (Mrs.

Potter) Palmer. Doggett's group met every fortnight in the parlors of members' homes. As their membership grew, the group found they needed more space. The Lathrop House was a perfect match.

The organization has been an attentive steward of the 120-year old mansion at 120 E. Bellevue Place for more than 90 years. When the Fortnightly converted the residence to a private club, they engaged a former pupil of Charles McKim to undertake the restoration. Few changes were made to the interior. All twenty-three rooms retain the same tasteful elegance that characterized the Lathrops' residence,

with decorative touches of the Georgian era and pieces of genuine Biedermeier furniture purchased by the first owners. We believe the Lathrops would be pleased with the use to which their residence is now being devoted—a gathering place of people noted for their dedication to the arts. The Lathrop House was designated a Landmark by the City

of Chicago in 1973 and was listed in the National Register of Historic Places. ■■■

The Reading Corner

And the Mountains Echoed Khaled Hosseini

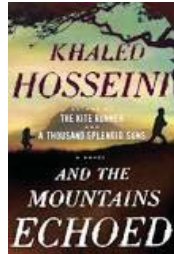
If you liked Hosseini's previous book, *The Kite Runner*, you will love his new offering, *And the Mountains Echoed*. *Mountains* spans several generations and moves back and forth between Afghanistan and the West. It deals with the relationship between parents and children and shows how the past can return to haunt the present, crossing the boundary between fable and realism.

The narrative focuses on Abdullah and his baby sister, Pari. As the story begins, Abdullah is 10 and Pari, 3. Their mother died giving birth to Pari, leaving Abdullah to be her principal caregiver. The family lives in a small Afghan village, and their lives are hard. One day, their father, Saboor, takes them on a long trip to the big city of Kabul where their Uncle Nabi works for a wealthy couple, the Wahdatis. Pari is adopted by this couple, who give her the education and privileges her father could not. She grows up to be a mathematician and moves to Paris, where she marries and has three children. But she cannot get rid of the nagging feeling that she was adopted and wants to go back to Afghanistan to find out about her past.

Abdullah ends up in California, running a restaurant called Abe's Kabob House. He has a daughter, whom he names Pari. Like her namesake, young Pari knows there is something hidden in the family's past, and she vows to reunite her father with his sister.

Hosseini has created an "echo" chamber of stories that mirror those of Abdullah and his sister Pari: the story of their stepmother Parwana

and her beautiful sister Masooma; the story of Parwana's brother, Nabi, who becomes a caretaker to his ailing employer; the story of Timur and Idris who had lived down the street from the Wahdatis but who now live in California; the story of a Greek



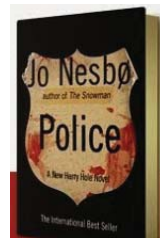
doctor named Markos who has moved to Kabul to operate on children who have been injured in the war and his childhood love, Thalia who cares for Markos' aging mother in Greece. We are caught up in the lives of all these characters and how they define

themselves through the years by the choices they make between duty and freedom, family responsibilities and independence, loyalty to home and exile abroad. These stories play out against the backdrop of Afghanistan's troubled history—from the pre-Soviet era through the years of the mujahdeen's fight against the Soviets, the rise of the Taliban, and the American invasion after the terrorist attacks of September 11. Hosseini's masterful story-telling and brilliant character development will fire your imagination and your memory

Police Jo Nesbo

Police is the book fans of Norwegian crime novelist Jo Nesbo, and I unashamedly admit to being one, have been waiting for. Be forewarned, it is grisly, gritty, and mesmerizing. Once you pick it up, you will not be able to put it down, so forget about a little bedtime reading at 10:00 p.m., because the next thing you know, it will be 2:00 a.m., and you'll still be telling yourself, "just one more page." Spoiler alert—one more page won't do it. You'll have to go all the way to the end for resolution.

This is one of Nesbo's darkest and most disturbing stories. It concerns a serial killer who observes the anniversary of each of his murders by luring



a police detective to a gruesome death at the scene of an unsolved crime. The key figure is Harry Hole, the unconventional Oslo detective who was killed in Nesbo's last book, *The Phantom*. Or was he? He seems to be omnipresent in the clandestine investigation into the cop killings being led by a rogue group of officers and forensics specialists—hovering in their midst and using his considerable skills to lead them to the killer.

In *Police*, Nesbo develops the background characters who have inhabited Harry's cases in the past. You will learn a great deal more about Stale Aune the psychologist who has become a therapist, but who spends his clients' sessions obsessing over how much he misses profiling sick souls who killed with such brutality it kept him awake nights; about Gunnar Hagen, capable head of the squad who keeps bumping heads with the arrogant, self-serving new police chief, Mikael Bellman; about special detective Katrine Bratt a computer expert who spends her free time watching "Breaking Bad," "Singin' in the Rain", and "Toy Story 3"; about forensics expert Beate Lonn who is blessed—and cursed—with the ability to recognize anyone she has ever seen, even if that person has altered his looks with plastic surgery; about Anton Mittet, a humble policeman assigned to guard a comatose hospital patient and fails at the task; and about the cruel and sadistic suspended police officer Truls Berntsen. All of these characters breathe life into a story that encompasses political corruption, drug dealing, prison politics, questionable police procedure, and sociopathic behavior. Definitely not a book for the faint of heart—but a terrific read for fans of well-written detective fiction.

The Goldfinch Donna Tartt

If you have had doubts about Donna Tartt being able to recapture the brilliance she displayed in her first

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book, *The Secret History*, *The Goldfinch* will dispel them. It is a dazzling novel that revolves around the painting of a pet bird created in 1654 by Dutch artist Carel

Fabritius who died that year when a gunpowder arsenal in Delft exploded destroying part of the city.

Tartt's novel, only her third in 20 years, has been compared to the works of Dickens—and, indeed it contains features that seem straight out of *Great Expectations*. The story begins when fourteen-year-old Theo, and his mother duck into the Metropolitan Museum to avoid a rainstorm. They wander into the gallery where Fabritius' painting hangs. There is a terrorist bombing and many people are killed, including Theo's mother. He escapes the debris of the museum with an heirloom gold ring, the "Goldfinch" painting, and the image of a beautiful young girl—all of which form a kind of "secret history" to the orphaned boy as he tries to find his way in an uncertain world.

Goldfinch's characters are also Dickensian: the Barbours, a posh Park Avenue family that takes in the orphan and promises him a secure future; James Hobart (Hobie), a kindly, somewhat mysterious, furniture restorer who becomes Theo's friend and protector; Pippa, the elfin red-headed girl whom Theo saw in the museum before the blast and whom he regards as his soul-mate; a Fagin-like father Larry, an alcoholic and a compulsive gambler who takes Theo away from Park Avenue to a sinister Las Vegas development far from the Strip where even Domino's won't deliver; Larry's girl friend, the pill-popping, coke-snorting Xandra; and Boris Badenov, Artful Dodger to Theo's *Oliver Twist*. Theo and Boris form a classic buddy team in a surreal reality that includes endless tv watching, pizza eating, dope smoking, and petty theft. The main character is, of course, the omnipresent Goldfinch, hidden in Theo's backpack. It is his constant companion and his last connection to his mother.

After a series of disasters in the desert, in which his father is killed,

Theo is once again set adrift. He makes his way back to New York with the painting where in, time, he becomes a partner in Hobie's furniture-restoring business and reconnects with the Barbour family—even becoming engaged to their daughter, Kitsey. In an effort to save Hobie's failing business, Theo engages in some unscrupulous transactions—passing off fakes as rare and expensive antiques—that threaten both his and Hobie's future. Investigations into the disappearance of *The Goldfinch* resurface, with suggestions that it is being used as collateral in international drug deals, bringing the elusive Boris back into the picture. As events snowball, Theo is confronted with violent criminals who covet *The Goldfinch* and will do anything to get it. How he copes with all of this and with the sadness of humans struggling to live make for an extraordinary work of fiction and leave us hoping we won't have to wait another ten years for the next Tartt oeuvre. 

Book Reviews by SHIRLEY BAUGHER