

A Little Stash from the Berkshires

Like many folks, I track listings on the books-for-sale sites like ABE Books, and especially the mega-search sites like AddALL. I not only look for certain titles, but also watch for a high frequency of listings by any dealer listing their books. A number of listings by the same dealer might mean that a collection was bought—either recently or sometime ago but only now being listed. Such was the case back on June 4 in which a dozen or so Mosher book titles were listed by Down in Denver Books, Dan Lorber, proprietor. Sometimes finding a pattern of multiple listings doesn't even require investigating skills. In this case, Lance Lorber included the following statement with each Mosher book listed: "For a list of our extensive collection of Mosher Press books, please click on 'Ask bookseller a Question' below." I didn't bother with going through that ritual since my preferred method is to do a Google search and come up with a telephone number so I can call directly. After leaving a message I also emailed Lorber to request the list and I wasn't disappointed in the result. He sent me a listing of thirty-eight Mosher books from which I purchased the following books along with his promise to get to the other boxes of Mosher books he has out in the shed. The number of books in which I had any interest was small, but I managed to find four of importance.

The first was Browning, Robert. *Pompilia* (Mosher, 1903), this being Copy No. 1 of 100 printed on Japan vellum. The seller had no way of knowing this, but Copy #1 is from Emilie Grigsby's library. It sold as part of lot 139 in the Grigsby sale of 1912 (Part II). Grigsby was one of the most important customers Mosher had, and I've always had a soft spot for anything from Grigsby's library. Of course this is just one more to add to those I already have in the collection.

Then there are the somewhat poorly printed volumes from the Post Mosher era (Mosher died in 1923 and Flora Lamb continued the business until 1941; then the Mosher Press was sold to the Williams Bookstore in Boston who continued to put out books under the Mosher Press name until the early 1970s. I personally dislike these books but here was a chance to purchase three that have eluded me and I purchased these for "research purposes" as part of the William Bookstore offerings:

(1) Bliss, Donald Thayer *The Seasons*. Boston, 1944 First Edition. Grey Wraps. Limited to 100 copies. Although not of any value, this imprint is nevertheless very scarce—perhaps because of its low value.

(2) Jacobs, Nancy. *Love and Happiness*. Boston 1947. First Edition. Hardcover. A fine copy in a very good+ in dust jacket., and

(3) Leigh, Leila M. *This Clarion Call for Peace*. Boston, 1945. Bound in plain flexible boards. Although limited to 500 copies, it's virtually impossible to find just like the Bliss book listed above.

Incidentally, I also picked up a Mosher Press look-a-like from Dan Lorber. I suggested that he might want to throw this one into the lot for free and lo and behold he did. It's no great shakes, but sort of looks like a one of Mosher's vellum bindings of the Lyric Garland Series from the outside. I probably paid Lorber far too much for these books, but I wanted to establish myself as a solid contact for all things Mosher so that when he got to the other boxes in the shed he'd think first of me.

One of the interesting side benefits to this transaction was that Lorber mentioned the interesting "collection" from where these books were obtained. After talking with him and having noticed that Lorber actually studied writing under the Nobel Prize-winning novelist Toni Morrison in Albany at one point, I asked if he wouldn't mind penning a few words about the source of the books. My request met with positive agreement and he wrote the following:

"Lance Douglas lived at the end of an incredibly long, twisty, up-and-downhill road, much of the time 1 1/2 cars passable in Yorktown Heights, a lovely section of upper Westchester -- heavily wooded, numerous eratics, colonial rock boundary walls. From his garage to the house was an equally long, twisty, up-and-downhill path (about 50 yards) which I had to negotiate so many times to take the 3,000 books out of his house -- box by box.

Lance grew up in Oklahoma, but knew he was not of that kind and moved away to NYC while in college. He had lived in this 600 sq. ft. cottage stuffed with books and vintage guitars for 30 years when I met him. A very sallow guy, he seemed to be two with nature. He looked about 70 but turned out to be 57. He seemed very solitary but there have been a number of books I have found in the collections that had inscriptions or cards with inscriptions that people had given him as gifts. He had worked for decades at the same hospital in the same job, turning down promotion offers. He was just happy doing what he did: work, home, books, NPR, classical music, guitars. I could tell from the collection, that he bought somewhat indiscriminately although his taste in books was largely very good. Besides Mosher, Pre-Raphaelites, Dante, female photographic erotica (mostly "artistic" stuff), illustrated, privately printed, limited, erotic literature of the 1920s, books by Philpotts, books on bookplates, and limited signed editions of all kinds. He also liked the offbeat, the weird and books which were just plain beautiful, especially printed and illustrated on unusual paper. In talking to him, I got the sense that he was a true bibliomaniac. The bibliomaniac differs from the bibliophile in that they experience a prolonged lack-of-control in places where books are for sale, whereas the bibliophile is defined as someone who just loves books. As he said to me, regarding his penchant for books:

"I bought. Oh yes, I bought." In the short time I spent with Lance (I made perhaps 8 trips to his house) I got to liking him alot. He threatened to get out of his job, sell the house and see the world before he died. But I suspect he will pretty much stay at the end of that twisty, turny road forever. And all the while, despite unloading his entire collection of 45 years to me, he will continue to buy books.

–Dan Lorber of Down in Denver Books, Stephentown, NY
June 8, 2011, printed with Lorber's permission.

Since purchasing the books mentioned above, Lorber has called me twice about other boxes of Mosher books he uncovered. Alas, none were of much interest to me being duplicates of what I already have. So it goes... you win some and you lose some.

July 5, 2011

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