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ness.” Jack B. Yeats died March 28, 1957, and although his unique personality can never be replaced, something of his spirit lives on in his extraordinary paintings, and in the imperishable memories he left with his many friends.

WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS AT COLBY COLLEGE

By Richard Cary

It was with some reluctance that William Butler Yeats left the newly acquired, desirable homestead at Riversdale to sail for America toward the end of October 1932. He and his family had barely settled in, and his head was brimming with ideas for additions and improvements. He did not especially enjoy talking from a podium, but this lecture tour (which turned out to be his last in the States), with its guarantee of a minimum twenty lectures at a then lucrative fee, held out two alluring compensations. It promised a large enough monetary harvest to effect the domestic projects he had in mind, and there were benefits to accrue for the Irish Academy of Letters.

With George Bernard Shaw he had conceived the Academy, publicly announced in Dublin on September 18th. Now he was busy inviting eminences to join, as well as raising sufficient moneys to give it a solid base. These funds he hoped to augment through a series of drawing-room talks. He had written expectantly to exile James Joyce from Riversdale on September 2nd, but from the Waldorf-Astoria in New York he expressed keen disappointment at Joyce’s refusal to become a member. A New York Times reporter quoted Yeats as saying that Joyce “finds it difficult, I think, to realize how important the Academy seems to men of Irish letters” (October 28, 1932, p. 17). With melancholy tolerance, he added: “His refusal was dictated, I am sure, simply because he is an anti-Academician. It was on a general principle.” At the same time he rejoiced that Eugene O’Neill accepted an associate mem-
bership ("associates" were classified as "less Irish" than full members). "We don't read much," Yeats remarked, "really we don't. We talk a great deal and some sing songs. We all know Homer and Shakespeare and Dante, but very little else. Everyone who reads anything reads O'Neill."

On this final circuit of American culture oases Yeats took with him as secretary and "nurse" the son of an old friend, Alan Duncan. The Boston agency of Alber & Wickes handled itiner­ary arrangements and, says Joseph Hone, "a luxury standard was maintained throughout." Yeats traveled as far west as Notre Dame University on this visit, making short forays to Cincinnati, where he met James Stephens, and to Toronto to see a childhood playmate. He fomented no trouble for his en­tourage, appearing punctually and fulfilling every engagement although he sometimes lectured twice a day, and — according to Norman Jeffares — invariably comported himself with "dignity and charm of manner."

The advertising flyer (8 x 11 inches), evidently prepared by the agency, had on its prime side the photograph of Yeats, to­gether with details of time and place of the lecture (reproduced on page 371 of this issue). The reverse side contained the fol­lowing text:

**WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS**

*Winner of Nobel Prize for Literature, Author, Dramatist, Poet, Artist
Senator in the Parliament of the Irish Free State*

It is with pleasure that we announce William Butler Yeats, famous Irish poet, dramatist, author and artist, for one of the small number of lectures he will give in America during the autumn.

The very successful tour last season of the Abbey Theatre Irish Players of Dublin, when they filled a thirty week engagement tour, extending from the Atlantic to the Pacific, renewed interest in that world famous theatre that recently became the National Theatre of the Irish Free State. It was William Butler Yeats who was responsible, perhaps, more than any other single individual, for the founding of the Irish Literary Theatre more than thirty years ago, which later developed into the present Abbey Theatre.

For more than a quarter of a century, Mr. Yeats had supported and sustained the Abbey Theatre with the authority of his world wide fame. It is, therefore, timely that he should come now to the United States when the superb productions of that Theatre are fresh in the mind of the American public.

Mr. Yeats not only was the leader in the establishment of the Abbey Theatre, but it was his "Wandering Oisin and Other Poems" which ap-
peared in 1889 when he was only in his twenty-fourth year, that signaled the beginning of the Irish Renaissance which brought Ireland into the stream of European drama and literature.

For more than thirty years he has been such a leader and during that time has been the associate of Bernard Shaw, George Moore, AE, Lady Gregory, J. M. Synge, and Edward Martyn.

Mr. Yeats is also an artist. His drawings in the London Punch appear under the name of "W. Bird."

Awarded Nobel Prize for Literature

Mr. Yeats' fame as a literary celebrity is world-wide. In 1923 he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. His writings are known in all parts of the world where the English language is read or spoken. More than a dozen of his plays have been produced in the Abbey Theatre, in London, in New York, and generally throughout the world. He is one of the world's foremost poets.

Born in Dublin, spending much time in his youth with his father who lived a great deal outside of Ireland, Mr. Yeats has spent most of his mature life in his native land and has been closely identified with the politics of Ireland during the past two decades. He is especially well informed about the problems and progress of the new Irish Free State and has served as a Senator in its Parliament since 1922.

A Gifted Public Speaker

He comes to the United States for a brief visit and will make a number of special addresses, generally on two themes. First, he is always interested in discussing the Irish Literary Renaissance, the development of the Irish National Theatre, and Irish culture in all its aspects.

Second, he is tremendously interested in "the new Ireland" that has come into being since the establishment of the Irish Free State. Upon this topic he may be expected to greatly interest any American audience.

On former visits to the United States, Mr. Yeats demonstrated that he is a brilliant platform speaker, witty, humorous, filled with enthusiasm and always saying unusual things in an unusual way. He is more than a first class lecturer. He is a genuine world celebrity, gifted with genius of a high order.

In the lower right corner, boxed, are fifteen titles of plays by Yeats. The iterative accent on Yeats's genius as a playwright is curious in view of the received opinion of him as the greatest poet in our language in our time. His agility as an artist, in fact, is accorded as much notice as his accomplishment in poetry.

More than three years had elapsed since the Board of Trustees of Colby College had made its epic decision to move the campus from the purlieus of Waterville to its present locale on Mayflower Hill, two miles distant. But as yet none of the
adequate new buildings had been erected. The current lecture course of which Yeats was the second of seven speakers was therefore to be held in the spacious First Baptist Church at the corner of Elm and Park streets. Herbert C. Libby, Professor of Public Speaking and Chairman of the committee in charge of the series, described the season’s prospects in the Colby Alumnus (First Quarter, XXIII, 1932-1933, p. 42):

In spite of the depression, the College is again carrying through its annual Lecture Course, and with even greater success than last year. The attendance on the part of the undergraduate body is most excellent, some 250 students purchasing the season ticket. With an equal number of citizens and out-of-town people holding tickets, the lecturers are talking to audiences ranging from 500 to 550 people.

The course offered this year comprises three more events than last year. The lecturers comprise Admiral William S. Sims, on October 14, Dr. William Butler Yeats, the Irish poet and dramatist, on November 4, Hon. Rennie Smith of the English Labor Party, Dr. Haridas Muzumdar, follower of Gandhi, Dr. Vaughan, professor of social ethics in Boston University, Dr. Hsieh, the Chinese diplomat, and Dr. Boleslavski, author and actor.

This course of lectures is offered to the students and townspeople at a small fee, a share of the expense being borne by the College as its contribution to the welfare of students and townspeople. This is the third year during which the course has been carried on, and its popularity speaks well for the wisdom of those who made it possible.

On the facing page appeared the photographs of Hsieh, Boleslavski, Sims, and Smith. One wonders whether the stature of Yeats was being properly appraised along the banks of the Kennebec, for there seemed to be no dearth in Waterville of the handbills adorned with his features. As its announcement of the pending event, the Colby Echo — voice of the student body — revised only the first paragraph, then ingeniously reprinted the agency text verbatim. The Waterville Morning Sentinel for November 3rd digested the same material into four convenient paragraphs, prefixed a perfunctory lead, but concluded with these fresh data: “The subject of Mr. Yeats’s talk at 8 o’clock tomorrow evening in the First Baptist Church is ‘The New Ireland.’ He will be introduced by Dean Ernest C. Marriner of the Colby faculty. It is now expected that Mr. Yeats will arrive in the city Friday morning. He will be the guest of Dean Runnals and the members of the Women’s Division of the college at the six o’clock dinner at Foss Hall.”
In the first week of November 1932 the United States lay in the nadir of its most infamous economic depression; it was also on the eve of a national presidential election. Incumbent Herbert Hoover, a prodigious individual but inept at public relations, was making two typical political blunders: he proclaimed that his stand on Prohibition, that "experiment noble in purpose" but detested and defied by the majority, was "unaltered"; and, in the face of lengthening breadlines and street-corner apple vendors, he ordered a check on government spending. His opponent Franklin Delano Roosevelt, a wizard in demagoguery, eyed the thirteen million unemployed shrewdly and asked for support to give American men jobs. Within four days of Yeats's Waterville appearance, Roosevelt was to win in a landslide that carried all but seven of the forty-eight states.

Yeats's senatorial experience to the contrary, it is to be doubted that he was either aware of or perturbed by these enormous ground swells as he set forth for central Maine. It is even less likely that during his stay in the Elm City he became cognizant that a West Athens youth was apprehended for murder in a stabbing affray, that funeral services were held for Dr. E. C. Whittemore, Colby's first Historian, that an astute labor leader predicted the return of beer by March 4th, that Sterns' Department Store was having a Disaster Sale, that the stock market picked up momentum in the last hour after dawdling all day, that the A & P was offering mackerel at 5 cents per pound and the First National doughnuts at 15 cents a dozen, that the movie at the Opera House starred Ken Maynard in "Come On, Tarzan," and that the Colby varsity football team was girding itself for a Saturday clash against New Hampshire's St. Michael's College, described as "rugged." From all evidence, Yeats moved from place to place enveloped in a kind of prophylactic vacuum.

In a recent letter Professor Libby divulged Yeats's reaction to the famed Maine landscape:

In handling the 125 or more lecturers who appeared here under the auspices of the college over a period of about 14 years, I made it a practice to meet the lecturer upon his arrival and to show him all the courtesies possible. I recall that Mr. Yeats duly arrived in the city with a secretary and that, after showing him to his room in the Elmwood Hotel, he expressed interest in a ride by automobile into the countryside. Mr. Yeats chose to ride in the rear seat, and his secretary and I
occupied the front seat. As we rode into the lake region, I carried on some conversation with him and pointed out interesting objects along the way. I soon discovered that he was giving no attention to my comments and had fallen fast asleep and remained asleep until we returned to the hotel. He offered no apology, and I sought none.

This tallies with Lady Wellesley’s observation that Yeats never remarked natural scenery, and with S. J. Woolf’s feeling while interviewing Yeats that “he seemed unaware of my presence. He was mounted upon his winged horse . . .”

Ernest C. Marriner, then Dean of Men, later Dean of the Faculty and now College Historian, provides this recollection in kind: “Like so many famous lecturers, especially from the British Isles, Yeats was utterly dependent upon his accompanying secretary, a very personable and quite efficient young man. I asked Yeats where was his next American appointment. He had not the slightest idea, and ordered the young secretary to disclose his itinerary.” Understandable, indeed, from a man who is reputed to have walked past his wife on one occasion without recognizing her.

The next stop on Yeats’s agenda was the scheduled dinner in the girls’ dining room at Foss Hall. His hostess Miss Ninetta Runnals, then Dean of Women, distils her memories of that hour to: “1) It was next to impossible to carry on any conversation with him. He seemed not in the least interested in any of us or in what we were saying. 2) Since he was Irish, I thought he might be Catholic. So I had on my table both meat and fish — as it was Friday. He chose meat!”

It was now Professor Libby’s turn to accompany him to the site of the lecture. If he had assumed from earlier conduct that Yeats’s temperament was one of wordless somnolence, Libby was summarily disabused. “When I called at the hotel, I found him completely upset. He mumbled about being disturbed by some person who had sought him out, but would not enlighten me on the subject. We went to the church auditorium where the large audience had assembled, and he seemed more wrought-up than ever. I recall very distinctly that it was necessary to defer the opening until he could get himself in hand.”

Dudgeon or not, the show went on. “I introduced Yeats on the occasion of his Waterville lecture,” Dean Marriner reminisces. “It was made from the platform, but not literally the
pulpit, of the Baptist Church. My most vivid recollection is of Yeats's enormous notes. Sitting behind him, I could see what the audience could not — the huge sheets of paper, twice the size of this sheet [8½ x 11 inches], spread out on the big reading desk, and covered with letters fully an inch high. Evidently Yeats was extremely near-sighted, and could read nothing but very large print, if it was not placed more than a few inches from his eyes."

What Yeats discoursed upon and how well it pleased the audience is to be judged from the following newspaper accounts, different enough from each other to be quoted entirely.

From the Waterville Morning Sentinel, November 5, 1932:

Dr. William Butler Yeats, distinguished Irish poet, playwright, and political figure, addressed a capacity audience at the First Baptist Church last night. He took as his subject "The New Ireland." Dean Ernest C. Marriner introduced him as the second speaker of the Colby lecture course.

Dr. Yeats, a Nobel Prize winner, outlined the history of literature in Ireland, and sketched the lives of the present outstanding literary figures. Himself an active supporter of the drama, being one of the founders of the famous Abbey Theatre Players, who are now making a tour of the United States, he eulogized the lives of the outstanding dramatic personalities of Ireland.

He mentioned in particular the great Jonathan Swift, and Bernard Shew.

He said that the Ireland of yesterday was "not a nation but a party" in which the factions, Catholic and Protestant, were divided. He described the presentation of plays in that turbulent period, and the great feeling which the nation as a whole felt regarding the controversial questions.

Dr. Yeats quoted several Irish poems, and kept his hearers in laughter and serious moods in accordance with the poem he selected to recite.

He described the sentiment of the Irish as being a very patriotic one, and a love for the drama. He said that he was proud to have seen the Irish dialect used in touching and serious plays as well as in the humorous types. He said that the dialect of the Irish could be made inspiring.

Dr. Yeats, throughout the course of his lecture, spoke in a clear, measured tone, and greatly impressed the audience with his ability to portray the feelings of the Irish, and to interpret these thoughts from everyday words to poetry.

At the conclusion of the speech members of the audience asked questions concerning the various political and educational matters relating to Ireland.
From the Colby Echo, November 9, 1932:

On Friday, Nov. 4th, William Butler Yeats, Irish dramatist, addressed the Colby student body and the general public on "The New Ireland." Dean Ernest C. Marriner introduced the speaker. Dr. Yeats, a tall, massively built man, endowed with a dark complexion, gray-black hair, and wearing rimmed glasses, had a commanding appearance. His voice, though not powerful, was rich and interesting. He seemed engrossed in his subject and at times almost seemed to lose himself in it.

At first Dr. Yeats briefly outlined the history of Ireland which he divided into four epochs or bells, beginning with the end of the feudal system and culminating in the death of Parnell. Parnell's death, said Dr. Yeats, had a great influence on the Irish people. The Catholics especially felt somewhat guilty and wished to avoid politics. It was then that Dr. Yeats and some other literary men organized the Irish theatre for the cultivation of the Irish people. Their work especially with the amateurs has proven very successful.

Dr. Yeats then spoke respectively of the various well-known authors. Lady Gregory, his dear friend, was the first to discover that Irish dialect could be used in serious drama. John Synge, upon suggestion of Dr. Yeats, became interested in the island people and wrote plays dealing with them. Some of these plays were extremely distasteful to the Irish people.

In conclusion Dr. Yeats mentioned a new group of writers who are disturbing Ireland. They are a group of young men such as Frank O'Connor and Francis Stuart who are writing as they think. Nearly all of these men have spent some time in prison, but they continue with their work.

After the lecture there was an open forum during which Dr. Yeats briefly discussed the present Irish problems.

Professor Libby is in diametric disagreement with the headline of the second report: YEATS LECTURE WELL RECEIVED. It was his opinion that "When he did give his address it was seriously affected by his state of mind and naturally was not well received." From the delineation of his manner in the first paragraph of the Echo story, and from S. J. Woolf's intimate impressions (New York Times, November 13, 1932, Sec. VI, p. 7), one surmises that Yeats's voice was soft and low, with a suspicion of brogue, and that he talked rather than declaimed. "I was in the Senate for six years," Yeats told Woolf, "and I never heard any oratory. When members wanted to speak they just leaned over their chairs and did so." The Irish, he maintained, "are a nation of brilliant failures, but we are the greatest talkers since the Greeks."
“Years have dimmed the memory of that extraordinary man” for Dean Marriner but he still remembers in gratifying detail that

While Yeats had public praise for all those associated with him and Lady Gregory in the revival of the Irish theatre, I sensed that, while he seemed very fond of Synge, he did not like Pinero personally, though respecting his dramatic ability. I also recall that, in conversation at the hotel, Yeats would say very little about Irish politics. Those were heated Sinn Fein days, and Yeats’s Protestant lukewarm attitude toward the movement was pretty well known. As you know, he never became enthused for an independent Ireland. His heart, like Gogarty’s and Lady Gregory’s, was devoted to the renaissance of Irish literature.

Dean Marriner obviously relished the noncompliant giant “whom I never saw but once, and then only for a few hours.” No such tone of regret marks Professor Libby’s valediction. He had no taste for Yeats’s “very eccentric” characteristics and was dissatisfied with his performance. “It was a moment of great relief when I bade him goodbye on the late evening train.” Cocooned in his own sidereal mood, Yeats rode blandly out of Waterville.

He wrote at least one letter at the Elmwood Hotel — to his wife — but it concerned Riversdale, not Waterville (winsome coincidence of aqueous names). From the Waldorf-Astoria in New York on January 1, 1933, he dispatched a chatty note to Olivia Shakespear telling how deeply he had been moved by D. H. Lawrence’s *Women in Love, The Rainbow,* and *Sons and Lovers,* and repeating his plaint that America was always too pointlessly exciting for him: “My mind is like an hotel lobby — endless movement seemingly no-whither.”

It was originally planned that he would leave for Southampton on December 27th but he canceled his reservation in order to attend a reception in his honor at the Museum of Irish Art and to speak at the opening of an exhibition of his brother’s paintings. He sailed on January 22nd. Apprised at the dock of George Moore’s sudden death, he expressed high approbation of his work despite Moore’s having once called him “a literary fop.”

Yeats realized approximately £1200 from this last peregrination through the States. About half of it went to subsidize the aborning Irish Academy of Letters, the remainder to ampli-
Riversdale, particularly a playhouse in the yard for the children. For Colby College it meant inscribing on its list of remarkable lecturers the name of William Butler Yeats beside that of Ralph Waldo Emerson — innovators and peers of two centuries of literature in English.

INDEX BENEFACTORUM

Gifts for our manuscript files and special collections continue to arrive in gratifying profusion. This short listing of some recently received items is merely indicative of the steady enhancement of all our special interests in authors, area, and private presses.

Mrs. Ruth Nivison of Head Tide, Maine: 64 more volumes from the personal library of Edwin Arlington Robinson and the library available to him in his youth at the Gardiner home. Some are inscribed by or to the poet, others by his father. There are volumes he pored over as a boy — Abbott’s Histories, Aesop’s Fables, Captain Marryat’s sea stories, The Pilgrim’s Progress; the poets he admired: Dryden, Homer, Emerson, Burns, Milton, Poe and Stevenson.

Miss Mabel Daniels of Boston, Mass.: several Hardy novels inscribed by Robinson with the initials PVM (Publius Vergilius Maro — a playful name they used for him during their long friendship); also an inscribed copy of her musical setting of his poem “Sisera.”

Mrs. Chester A. Baker of Waterville, Maine: Robinson’s two French textbooks at Harvard; a score of volumes inscribed by him to the sister of his friend Ed Moore, including the novels of Jane Austen, the works of Oliver Wendell Holmes, the essays of Lamb, Hazlitt and Leigh Hunt, and the poems of Browning; also a quantity of early newspaper clippings about Robinson.