

The Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society Newsletter



Mission Statement

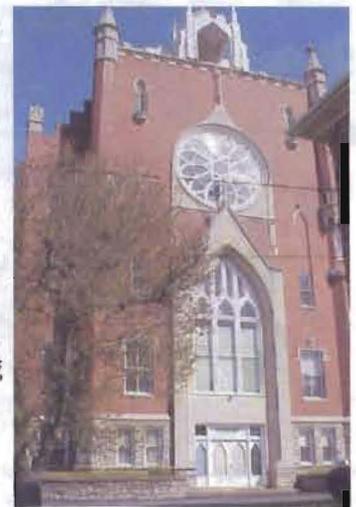
The Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society seeks to promote scholarship in the work of Elizabeth Madox Roberts, to encourage its teaching, and to pursue the goal of returning such classic novels as *The Great Meadow* to print. Membership is open to all who love Roberts. We are a national organization, but we are particularly interested in encouraging Kentucky membership and establishing a liaison with members in the Springfield area. Anyone interested in membership, serving on the Advisory Council, or acting as a Kentucky/Springfield liaison, please contact John Langan at 583 Springtown Road, New Paltz, NY 12561 or at langanj@newpaltz.edu.

Fourth Annual National Elizabeth Madox Roberts Conference April 21-22, 2002

The Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society (EMR) will hold its fourth annual conference on April 21-22, 2002, in Springfield, Kentucky. The prelude to the conference will take place at Penn's Store in Gravel Switch, KY, the site of the fourth annual Kentucky Writers Day. Organized by Jeanne Penn Lane, Kentucky Writers Day features

readings of the poetry and prose of Kentucky authors, as well as storytelling and singing. The conference will open on Sunday, April 21 at 6 p.m. with the annual conference banquet at the historic Beaumont Inn in Harrodsburg. The evening will feature a keynote address by the Society's Honorary President, Dr. H. R. Stoneback, Director of Graduate Studies in English at the State University of New York at New Paltz. Society President John Langan, of the City University of New York Graduate Center, will also address the dinner gathering.

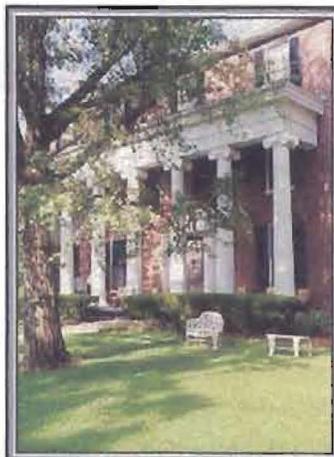
The conference will continue Monday, April 22 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Saint Catharine College in Springfield with paper



St. Catharine College

presentations on Roberts' life and work. This year's conference will celebrate the 75th anniversary of the publication of Roberts' second novel, *My Heart and My Flesh*.

The public is invited to attend.



The Beaumont Inn

Report on the 2001 Conference

The third annual Elizabeth Madox Roberts Conference took place April 22-23, 2001. Not only did the conference attract its largest participant list to date, but the Society was honored to have among its speakers the noted Roberts scholar, William H. Slavick, organizer of the Eliza-



Dennis Winter, Gregg Neikirk, Sparrow Stoneback, Chris Tanis, and Harry Stoneback perform at Kentucky Writers Day 2001.

beth Madox Roberts Centenary Conference at Saint Catharine College in 1981. The event opened at Kentucky Writers Day, organized by Jeanne Penn Lane and hosted at Penn's Store, in Gravel Switch, KY. The Kentucky Writers Day program included readings of Roberts' works and folk song performances by H.R. Stoneback, Sparrow Stoneback, Gregg Neikirk, Dennis Winter, and Chris Tanis. Dr. Stoneback, Professor of English at the State University of New York, was the day's featured speaker, delivering a talk enti-

tled, "Celebrating Kentucky Writers; or Celebrated Kentucky Writers I Have Known."

Terry Ward, Chair of Humanities at St. Catharine College, served as program master of ceremonies.

The day's activities also included original poetry recitation by audience members.

That evening, the Society hosted its annual conference banquet at The Beaumont Inn in Harrodsburg. After welcome and introductory remarks by John Langan, President of the EMR Society, Dr. Stoneback's keynote address, "Where Now? The 'Roberts Revival' and the Roberts Papers at the Library of Congress," presented an overview of the Roberts papers and stressed the importance of this extraordinary collection for Roberts scholars. A video on Roberts' literary legacy was also shown.

Paper sessions were held on Monday, April 23 in the inspiring setting of the large Saint Catharine College Chapel. Professor Terry Ward and John Langan opened the day's



Saint Rose Priory, whose soaring tower inspired the fictional "St. Lucy Tower" in Roberts' *The Time of Man*.

events, which included five panel sessions that examined Roberts' poetry, short fiction, and the novels, *The Time of Man*, *The Great Meadow*, *My Heart and My Flesh*, *Black is My Truelove's Hair*, and *Jingling in the Wind*. Presenters included Chris Carolei, Chris Tanis, Fiona Paton, Jenica Shapiro, Jane Dionne, Michael Smith, David Fish, Dennis Winter, Adam Romano, John Langan, and Tina Iraca Green, all from SUNY New Paltz. Other panelists included Jane Keller (University of Baltimore), Elizabeth Wright (University of North Carolina), Carol Kirk (University of Missouri), and Gregg Neikirk (Westfield State College). Panel moderators were Dr. Stoneback, John Langan, Fiona Paton, Breida Gallagher (Independent Scholar), and Steve Florczyk (SUNY New Paltz).

Following the conference, the members of the Society were

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Historic Penn's Store, home of Kentucky Writers Day

Third Annual Conference continued

invited to tour Elenores, Roberts' Springfield home. Owner Joan Hamilton graciously opened her home and its grounds to the group. Later, attendees made their annual sojourn to Roberts' grave site at Cemetery Hill, which overlooks the town of Springfield.

Closing ceremonies were held in the evening at the Beaumont's stately Goddard Hall where conference participants

mused about their Kentucky experience, savored the "place" of Roberts' novels and home, and joined together in an evening of song and celebration.



Elenores, the Springfield home of Elizabeth Madox Roberts



EMR Society members visiting Elenores at the kind invitation of Joan Hamilton on April 23, 2001.

President's Message

2001 was the most important year for the Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society yet. For the second year in a row, we increased participation at our annual conference 100%, attracting scholars from locations including North Carolina, Maryland, and Missouri. That conference also saw us being joined by Professor William Slavick, whose work on the 1981 Centennial Roberts conference first showed that such a conference could be run successfully, and whose work on the special Roberts issue of *The Southern Review* has meant so much to all of us. In conjunction with our third annual con-

ference, we once again participated in Kentucky Writers Day at Penn's Store, with members taking the microphone both to read Roberts' prose and poetry, and to sing some of the songs that inspired her.

Our 2001 conference, which had as its theme the 75th anniversary of *The Time of Man*, was only the first in a year-long series of events celebrating three quarters of a century of Roberts' classic novel. In May, we sponsored a panel on *The Time of Man* at the 2001 meeting of the American Literature Association in Cambridge, Massachu-

setts. This was followed by a Roberts Symposium held in September at Westfield State College in Westfield, Massachusetts. Finally, our celebration of the novel concluded with a special Graduate Forum on Roberts held at SUNY New Paltz in November. Together, these events demonstrated the continuing vitality of Roberts' classic work, and the extent to which we still have only scratched the surface of what it has to offer us.

In addition, 2001 saw members of the Roberts Society making inroads into print.

The Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society is saddened by the death of Alma 'Tincy' Penn Lane, the proprietor of Penn's Store, who passed away December 4, 2001. The Society also remembers and celebrates the life of the late Dava Lane.

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President's Report continued

Steve Florczyk's essay on Roberts' short fiction made its appearance in the Spring 2001 issue of *The Shawangunk Review*. A special Roberts Feature Section in the Summer 2001 issue of *Appalachian Heritage* included articles by Jane Keller, John Langan, and Gregg Neikirk, all of which had been delivered first as papers at the 2001 conference.

As always, for all that we have done, more remains ahead of us if we are to gain for Roberts the recognition she so richly deserves. Nonetheless, we can look back on 2001 with feelings of pride and satisfaction for work done passionately and well. The future looks promising: graduate students continue to learn about and work on Roberts, there is talk of more of her work being returned to print, and, in what is perhaps the most exciting news of recent months, our Honorary President, H.R. Stoneback, has announced that he

has signed a book contract with the University of Kentucky Press to deliver a book on Roberts by 2004. Such new scholarship is essential to the continued and enduring survival of this "Roberts revival," and it is truly heartening to know that a scholar of Dr. Stoneback's stature will be contributing a new volume to the all too small list of books on Roberts. Although technically it falls outside the purview of this column, since it has only just occurred, I also should mention here that Dr. Stoneback has just published an important essay on Roberts in the *Kentucky Humanities Review*. Already, his article is attracting considerable attention; his phone, he tells me, will not stop ringing. I think this proves that there is a broader interest in Roberts waiting to be tapped. It is heartening to think that time is on our side.

—John Langan

Seeking (and Finding) Roberts Aficionados

In my recent essay ("Roberts, Still, Stuart, and Warren") in the March 2002 issue of *Kentucky Humanities* I had several aims in mind: 1) to contextualize Roberts studies within the amplitude and exactitude of Kentucky literature; 2) to pay tribute to the Roberts Society; 3) to seek out, in the magazine's broad readership, Roberts aficionados that the Society, to date, has failed to reach. I have been pleased and moved by many responses to the essay from readers, especially from Roberts aficionados previously unknown to the Society. For example, Nell R. Haydon, Director of Main Street/Renaissance in Springfield, writes: "I have been a fan of our Kentucky writers for many years—but have always followed Elizabeth Madox Roberts devotedly since she is from my hometown of Springfield." And, in her regionally circulated weekly newsletter, *Springfield Renaissance*, Haydon writes: "I have been told for many years that Elizabeth Madox Roberts was going to be a pretty famous writer one of these days—and they have been talkin' about her and

the small Kentucky town she lived in up there in northern universities for years!...Dr. H. R. Stoneback (State University of New York) tells us (and 2000 student over his years of teaching) that Roberts gets 'the crown for Greatest Kentucky Novel...*The Time of Man*...the book that announced the beginning of the Southern Renaissance'...He is teaching many scholars and future teachers up there in New York that *The Time of Man* is not just a 'great Kentucky novel, but one of the greatest novels ever. Period.' Stoneback maintains that Roberts' work played a significant role in William Faulkner's literary success. Doesn't it make you proud to think of Roberts looking out of her window on North Walnut Street, or sitting up on Cemetery Hill overlooking Springfield, or leaning up against St. Rose Church writing? And she was writing "one of the greatest novels ever!"

Another reader, David T. Lewis MD,

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writes from Elizabethtown: "I discovered Elizabeth Madox Roberts as a teenager and read several of her books at that time." Dr. Lewis, a physician, notes that he "started out to get a graduate degree in English but got diverted to another career." He remains a Roberts and Kentucky literature aficionado.

Ann Harding, reference librarian at Northern Kentucky University (and Campbell County Public Library), writes at length about the "eloquence" and "inspiration" she finds in the essay's tribute to her beloved Kentucky writers.

The Roberts Society is very pleased to have made contact with these writers and many other Roberts aficionados, and we invite them to join us in the work of promulgating news of Roberts and Kentucky literature.

—H.R. Stoneback

~ Notes & Queries ~

Is the Evidence More Than Anecdotal?

To set in motion in these pages that longstanding feature of literary society newsletters, a "Notes & Queries" section, I propose the following point of departure.

A number of readers of my *Kentucky Humanities* essay wondered if the evidence is more than anecdotal that a) Roberts influenced Faulkner and b) Roberts was regarded by the Nashville Agrarians (especially Davidson, Tate, Warren) as an exemplary Southern Agrarian writer. Thus I invite all readers of this newsletter to submit evidence from biographies, letters, memoirs, etc. (published and unpublished) that may support these contentions. Submissions will be printed in future "Notes & Queries" columns.

—H. R. Stoneback

H.R. Stoneback author of forthcoming book on Elizabeth Madox Roberts

H.R. Stoneback, Director of Graduate Studies in English at SUNY New Paltz and Honorary President of the EMR Society, is at work on his book, tentatively entitled, "Elizabeth Madox Roberts: A Reassessment," which is under contract with the University of Kentucky Press (slated for 2004 publication).

Call for Papers for the 2003 Conference

The Fifth Annual Elizabeth Madox Roberts Conference scheduled for April 2003 invites papers on any topic related to the work of the novelist, short story writer, and poet. Topics for consideration include Roberts in the context of Southern literature, Roberts' literary style and influences, Roberts and Modernism, Roberts and Regionalism, Roberts and Feminism, and Roberts and Kentucky. Papers should be 15 to 20 minutes long. One-page abstracts are due by January 21, 2003, and should be sent to John Langan, 583 Springtown Road, New Paltz, NY 12561, langanj@newpaltz.edu.

The Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society

Honorary President: H.R. Stoneback, SUNY New Paltz

President: John Langan, CUNY Graduate Center

Vice President: Breida Stutzman, Independent Scholar

Vice President: Steven Florczyk, SUNY New Paltz

Advisory Council:

Mark Bellomo, Lynne Crockett, Sheila Donnelly, Tina Green, Jane Keller, Jeanne Penn Lane, Gregg Neikirk, Fiona Paton, Sharon Peelor, William H. Slavick, Terry Ward

The Roberts Society Newsletter welcomes contributions, including Roberts-related notes and queries, and brief excerpts from papers presented at EMR conferences. Please send submissions for the January 2003 newsletter to langanj@newpaltz.edu by September 1, 2002.