

# The Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society Newsletter



Newsletter No. 15

www.emrsociety.com

March 2014

## 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Roberts Conference

The Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society will hold its XVI Annual Conference in beautiful Harrodsburg and Springfield (Saint Catharine College), Kentucky, April 26-28, 2014. The conference headquarters—site of the opening banquet, keynote session, and annual business meeting—is the lovely and legendary Beaumont Inn in historic Harrodsburg. Academic paper sessions will be held at Saint Catharine College, just outside of Springfield, Roberts' hometown.

Please direct conference inquiries (registration, lodging, special events, etc.) to the Co-Conference Directors:

H. R. Stoneback, English Dept.,  
SUNY-New Paltz, New Paltz,  
NY 12561 and Matthew Nickel,  
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## Roberts Around the World PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

### Matthew Nickel

The Roberts Society has become a very special thing to many of us. It is a thing that lives true, and we celebrate it not only at our annual conference in April in Kentucky or at one of several national or international conferences but also in our conversations with general readers and students and newcomers to Roberts' work. We are excited each year to celebrate Roberts in her own country and throughout the world.

From its inception sixteen years ago in H. R. Stoneback's pickup truck until now, the Roberts society has continued to grow. Society members have presented on Roberts' writing from Kentucky to Georgia to Florida to Hawaii to France and Italy. And this coming summer, again, Roberts members will be presenting at both the International Ernest Hemingway Conference and the International Richard Aldington/Imagism Conference in Venice and on Torcello.

The society is also welcoming new Roberts enthusiasts every year, some of whom you will read from in the following pages. Of particular interest this year is Don Scriven, a lawyer, book collector, and writer, whose passion for literature and now Roberts is one key indication of the literary vibe beyond the sometimes narrow confines of anthologies and academia. And last year, we honored Earl Hamner with *The*

*Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society Award for Southern and Appalachian Writing.*

The society is also working on and disseminating the scholarly word on Roberts. Jane Keller is making progress on the Roberts biography, collecting material across the country on Roberts, her friends, and her connections. William Slavick is hard at work on the letters project. And the Reading Roberts Series, under the General Editorship of H. R. Stoneback, is also moving along. Jamie Stamant and Nicole Stamant have presented their progress on *A Buried Treasure* at SAMLA and Matthew Nickel and Jessica Nickel have presented (and will present in late-March at CEA in Baltimore) their work on the short stories at SAMLA. The Reading Roberts Series is of utmost importance to the advancement of Roberts scholarship.

Finally, at the local level, our conference has continued to be a rare experience and opportunity for all those involved to enjoy and celebrate Elizabeth Madox Roberts. Every year, our society relives Roberts' works and her places through our experience in Kentucky, at Saint Catharine College, in Springfield at Elenores, with the Springfield Renaissance, in Gravel Switch at Penn's Store and at Roncevaux Farms, and in Harrodsburg at Kentucky Lit Book & Cigar Store and our conference headquarters, the Beaumont Inn. We thank all those who continue to make the Roberts Society a very special thing, and we look forward to seeing you all soon in Kentucky and abroad!

## Forthcoming Essay on EMR

Don Scriven

A forthcoming long essay on Elizabeth Madox Roberts, written from a book collector's perspective, will appear in the magazine *Firsts* later this year. The article will include pictures of first printings of all of Roberts' books (including her two volumes of poetry and two collections of short stories) in their original dust wrappers. First edition copies in collectible condition of several titles (*Under the Tree* and *The Haunted Mirror*, for example) are quite rare. An annotated checklist at the article's end will physically describe the books and dust wrappers, address how to identify first printings, and include other bibliographic details of special relevance to collectors. While *Firsts* (published monthly except for July and August) is primarily devoted to collectors, it also encourages subscribers to read and, especially, to discover neglected authors of merit.

The article, roughly 7,000 words in length, will include substantial biographical information on Roberts, take note of both contemporary and subsequent critical reaction to her books, and include hints on how one unfamiliar with Roberts might approach her. The author's own opinions on Roberts' achievement will focus mainly on her understated and subtle, but very real, feminism expressed in a lyrical and unique style untainted by polemical bombast. Among other things, the article will maintain that Roberts' best works are every bit as worthy of discovery, academic attention, and teaching as are those of such other literary luminaries as Kate Chopin, Willa Cather, Ellen Glasgow, Edith Wharton, Zora Neale Hurston, Caroline Gordon, Eudora Welty and Flannery O'Connor. It is anticipated that the article will appear in late 2014.

## "Read at her funeral": The Poems from *Song in the Meadow* Read at Roberts' Funeral

H. R. Stoneback

Ivor Roberts' inscribed copy of *Song in the Meadow*, in my EMR collection, is autographed on the title page and inscribed to her brother Ivor on the front endpaper: "To Ivor Roberts—Presented by the Author." Since I heard someone—Janet Lewis or a Springfield resident? (I am not certain three decades later)—say at Bill Slavick's Roberts Centenary Conference at Saint Catharine College that poems from *Under the Tree* were read at her funeral; and since I have always preferred the poems of *Song in the Meadow*, I am pleased to note that these words—"Read at her funeral"—are written in bold ink, apparently in Ivor's hand, next to these two poems: "Blessed Spirit, Guard" (53) and "Evening Hymn" (82).

## Reading Roberts' Short Stories: A Roberts Masters Thesis

Jessica M. Nickel

Under the direction of Dr. H. R. Stoneback, Honorary President of the Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society, I completed a 130-page Masters thesis on Roberts in December 2013. The title of this thesis is: *Reading Roberts' Short Stories: a Close-Reading Thesis in Preparation for a Scholarly Book*. As the title suggests, this thesis provides groundwork for the book EMR Society President Matthew Nickel and I are co-writing, which examines both volumes of Roberts' short stories, *The Haunted Mirror* and *Not By Strange Gods*. This book will be published in the Reading Roberts Series which Stoneback has initiated and which will include close readings of all Roberts works conducted by various EMR society members and published within the coming years.

Recent research on Roberts has proven indispensable to our project. In May 2013, Matthew Nickel, Roberts biographer Jane Keller, and I visited the Library of Congress in Washington and spent four days researching the Roberts manuscripts located there. From this trip, we gathered substantial data regarding Roberts' short stories and other writing: copies of the manuscripts for all short stories in *The Haunted Mirror* and *Not By Strange Gods*; copies of manuscripts for stories "Sallie May" and "The Prophet" (published posthumously in *Elizabeth Madox Roberts: Essays of Discovery and Recovery*); unpublished manuscripts for stories; and Roberts' notes and fragments, which are entertaining and eye-opening. Along with my thesis and our combined research, the information we collected at the Library of Congress allows us to confidently pronounce that our book is well on its way.

My thesis pays direct attention to allusion, intertextuality, history, manuscript discrepancies and similarities, themes, and symbols. Our book concentrates on these aspects along with each story's publication history, public response and critical analysis, background and manuscript material. We especially consider details which prove particularly interesting and are useful to the overall understanding of Roberts' work and the advancement of Roberts scholarship. Once published in the Reading Roberts Series the intended goal is that our book will prove a worthy resource and serve Roberts scholars in their own research on the short stories for years to come.

## A Special Thanks to Chad Horn

Matthew Nickel

The Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society would like to thank Chad Horn, poet and proprietor of Kentucky Lit & Cigar Store in Harrodsburg, KY. Chad has opened his doors to society members for years, and the special welcome we receive each year at his store is one of those rare and wonderful opportunities that makes our conference and the Kentucky experience perfect. We have enjoyed perusing his collection of books—especially his rare books and Roberts memorabilia—and we always enjoy his cigar stock. His store is a good place to come to after some of us travel the width of half the country, and his cheese and wine board fits well in our rituals of moveable feasts. Above all, the Society and officers would like to thank Chad for his generous contribution each year to the Sparrow Memorial Award. For those who are not aware, Chad donates the proceeds from what the Roberts Society purchases in his store to the award fund, helping graduate students attend our conference every year. His contribution last year was \$400. Thank you, Chad.

Jennifer Warren performing  
Gregg Neikirk's play, *Coming Home: The Elizabeth Madox Roberts Story*,  
Springfield 2013



## “It Grieves Me”—Roberts on the First British Edition of *A Buried Treasure*

H. R. Stoneback

One recently acquired item in my Roberts Collection is EMR's personal copy of the first British edition of *A Buried Treasure* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1932). It is *not* a presentation copy autographed on the title page (as she almost always did) and it is *not* inscribed to anyone (as she often did). This is what is written, in her hand, on the front endpaper:

Elizabeth Madox Roberts  
Elenores  
Springfield, 1932.

Immediately beneath this mark of ownership, telling us in no uncertain terms what Roberts thought of this edition, she writes: “This edition was printed from the first proof sheets. From these proofs revisions were made before the printing of the first American Edition. It grieves me that these revisions did not find a way into the English Edition.”

A cursory side-by-side examination of the first and last few pages of the American and British editions reveals a number of differences. Aside from the American and British spelling variants to be

expected (e.g., “meager”/“meagre,” “parlor”/“parlour”), there are more substantive Roberts revisions not included in the British edition. What Roberts had revised for the American edition—“Since hate was quickly spent” (Viking 1931: 5)—remains in the British edition: “Hate being spent” (Cape 1932: 10). And this: “for all of them were now sheltered” (Viking 5) remains “all now being sheltered” (Cape 11). Clearly, Roberts' revisions reflected one stylistic demand of her narrator's voice, her ear, in the deletion of awkward *-ing* constructions.

Still worse, entire phrases and sentences that Roberts cut remain in the British edition. One of the more egregious examples comes from the final pages of the novel, where the authorial voice intrudes on an engaging folk dialogue about katydid with this assertion: “When the first katydid is heard it is said that in six weeks one can expect frost” (Cape 254). Roberts wisely cut that bit of flat local-colored farmer's almanac journalism from the corrected American edition, allowing the folk voices to carry the dialogue. Conclusions? The British edition—and any literary analysis based on it—must not be trusted. Important examples of Roberts' craft and art of revision are disregarded and we can understand why she declared: “It grieves me.”

## Notes on Roberts' Marginalia in Her Personal Copy of the first British edition of *The Time of Man*

H. R. Stoneback

Another volume in EMR's personal collection of British first editions of her work is a copy of the 1927

Jonathan Cape publication of *The Time of Man*. At first glance, a side-by-side examination of the American and British first editions and Roberts' notes in the Cape volume, seems to reveal a displeasure on her part with changes made in the British edition, the kinds of editorial meddling or oversight reflected in the Cape edition of *A Buried Treasure* (See above: “It Grieves Me”). There are many instances where, with her

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### Notes on Roberts' Marginalia from previous page

typical fastidious attention to compound nouns, she has marked changes to *open*, *closed*, and *hyphenated* compound formations. Where the American edition has, for example, "plant bed" and "barnlot" the British edition has "plantbed" and "barn lot," and Roberts corrects these words in her penciled annotations.

A closer look reveals that Roberts is not merely engaging in displeased cross-checking of editions, as she did with *A Buried Treasure*. Here she seems to be making corrections and revisions even where the American and British editions are the same; thus she provides marginal corrected versions of such compound words as the following: "poor-trash," "hair-lines," "barn-lot," "mule-barn," "pepper-bread," "willow-tree," "snake-doctors," "tobacco-field," "rail-fence," and "brush-snarls." Compound word formation is more a matter of style than grammar, and some usage experts will accept many triple variants (e.g., like "barn lot," "barn-lot," and "barnlot," "ink well," "ink-well," and "inkwell" may all be considered "correct"). Since Roberts is the quintessential stylist we must ask what her emendations (correcting both American and British editions) in this particular volume signify. Clearly, she prefers hyphenated compounds; but are we to regard that preference, given the agreement here of the two editions and her dissatisfaction with both, as stylistic evolution, part of her ongoing Flaubertian search for *le mot juste*?

No, not if we are aware of her long list of compound noun forms found among her notes in the Library of Congress papers; and her response to Viking copy-editor, Louis N. Feipel, who raised many objections to her "variant compoundings." Her succinct reply was: "I prefer the one-word form." And no, not if we consult the holograph manuscript and the typescript of *The Time of Man* (LC: Folder 4). What such study reveals is that Roberts' penciled changes in this 1927 British edition reflect her will to *restore* her intentions, her *style*, distorted in *all* printed editions.

Aside from compound words, here are a few more examples of passages she corrects: "almost never straightening" (Viking 4; Cape 4; UP KY 13); "I'm plum a fool" (Viking 6; Cape 6; UP KY 13); "in a year there's as many out again" (Viking 79; Cape 79; UP KY 87); "it's a strange wonder nohow" (Viking 80; Cape 80; UP KY 88). In her Cape edition Roberts brackets "almost never" and writes "scarcely" in the margin; underlines "plum" and writes "plumb" in the margin; crosses out "year" and writes "year's time"; and in the margin she writes "anyhow?" next to "nohow." Even a *plumb* fool and a fool about plums know *anyhow* that *scarcely* is better than "almost never" and a *year's time* is more timely than a "year." Roberts had a good ear, one of the best ears in American literature, and a superb eye for the

look of words on a page. And we should not be surprised to discover in her LC holograph manuscript (bearing on the first page in her hand this inscription: "From this manuscript the Viking Press printed—August 1926") that all of her emendations in the Cape edition are present in the manuscript. Her later marginalia, then, amount to a process of *restoration* not *re-creation*. In the LC typescript not just the variants cited here but many other deleterious changes appear—apparently the result of the Viking Press editorial process, without her approval. Thus Roberts' marginal annotations in her copy of the British edition could be construed as a plea for restoration. *Innyhow*, as we say in Kentucky, maybe it's time for a corrected *American* edition of *The Time of Man*.

### New Edition of *The Time of Man*

#### H. R. Stoneback

From Hesperus Press in Great Britain, following shortly after the 2012 publication of *The Great Meadow* (see *EMRS Newsletter* No. 14: 2013), a new edition of *The Time of Man* has been issued. Once again, it is a handsome paperback edition with fold-in flaps. The front and back cover blurbs are well-chosen: "This is a book that embraces life . . . arresting, rhythmical, fresh" (*The New York Times*); "Original, powerful, and, without ever verging upon sentimentality, tender" (*Saturday Review of Literature*). Unlike last year's edition of *The Great Meadow*, this volume does not contain an introduction. The front fold-in flap contains this plot summary: "Written in the subtle, soaring prose for which Elizabeth Madox Roberts was known, *The Time of Man* is a spectacular coming of age story." The back flap notes that Roberts "was the author of seven novels primarily concerned *with life in the Kentucky mountains*" (my emphasis). This inaccurate and rather unfortunate misnomer for Roberts Country, for the Outer Bluegrass and Knob country where her work is set, may well be traced to the popularity of her best known short story, "On the Mountainside"—her *only* work set in the Kentucky mountains.

Then, as if in contradiction to the back-flap assertion, the cover features a rather delicate Ellen-figure, wearing a plain white bonnet (or a suspiciously Mennonite head-covering), gazing out over *perfectly flat* grasslands of a kind that do not exist in Roberts' work. We applaud the efforts of Hesperus Press to bring more of Roberts into print and thus bring her works to a wider audience. And we do not wish to scold the cover design vision of an artist who has likely never seen Roberts' Kentucky; but maybe—

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## Colonel, President, Honorary President: All the Way Up

*“Don’t stop loving and seeing and  
singing the world: Sing it for me”  
Sparrow Stoneback*

**Matthew Nickel**

**July 24, 2009**

Red Caboose Motel

“She’s a railroad lady, just a little bit shady,” he sang softly as our dining car waitress brought us our pork chops, sauerkraut. “No shoofly pie in this car. We’ll have to get some tomorrow at the Central Market.” The waitress smiled a little bit crazy, but still carrying the charm of Pennsville, NJ. That night we drank wine on our Norfolk and Western Caboose #41 looking out over the most fertile fields I had ever seen, our talk finding its way into the soil, the earth carrying our words far across the Lancaster County sky.

“You see what I mean about my country, the land. *You* saw it there today. *You* understand about Daniel Boone now. We were not of the Boone kind. Stonebacks—nor Wetzlers. I don’t want to tell you what kind he was the way my ancestors used to talk about it, but now you’ve seen it.”

We had driven through country that day. The country wanted to start in Allentown, and Emmaus made us feel like someone Holy was holding on driving through certain fields and hills the way the sun leaned against the landscape. But the sun did not own it as we approached the Daniel Boone Homestead. Nobody owned the landscape there. There were no fields planted, no rolling hills of plenitude, no Landscape as Eden, no American as Adam. We found a spring under the homestead, but how it tasted and from whence it ran I could never know in my bones like I could know the waters of the Hudson Valley or certain springs in France. The water there was not an event like drinking from a dipper gourd hanging off a branch on a knob over Little South in the country of Kentucky. Nor was it like the numinous landscape that beckoned, that drove the car through French Creek Falls later after Boone’s place. The forest then was medieval, fern shaking in half light, raspberries bursting in flames on slopes above the road. In St. Peters Village, a winding ancient place on the edge of a secret stream, I realized for the first time why Boone left his country and fled to Kentucky. And I knew instantly why a kid from Camden, after having seen the garden of innocence of Pennsylvania owned and tilled by his own family and then lost during the Great De-

pression, would also find a new innocence to be stayed by on the limestone pillars and cliffs of the Kentucky River.

God calls us to mysterious places, more mysterious even than the Red Caboose Motel on the side of the road in Ronks, PA. But I made sure, after enough conversation about ancestral landscapes and Pennsylvania Dutch cuisine (and after enough wine) to pull a large old railway platform cart through the field (and into a pile of dung where I left it) in the spirit of the place. At least we laughed, and the sound came out like laughter out of the bellies of giants.

**July 25, 2009**

Lancaster Central Market

It felt like a French Cathedral only it was Pennsylvania and instead of hymnals and marble there were vegetables, smoked meats, apple dumplings, shoofly pie and souse, sauerkraut, and S. Clyde Weaver. The place was bigger than my eyes; it was manifest. It reminded me of Diony’s vision in Roberts’ *The Great Meadow*, “A vision of places to sell the growth of the farms, . . . a vision of some market place off in some town beyond the fields.” Of course, Diony had no knowledge of Pennsylvania and how it had been before she was. We do not begrudge her that. Still, it was the place where the wearying infinitives of America came to an end and it settled a score inside my own being of searching for the real old thing after having found it years before in France.

No matter where we go with Stoney, it is always *the real old thing* and he always carries it *all the way up*. And after being on the road with him, we have all seen and felt things that would make us believers had we not already followed him all the way. Perhaps that is the way most first-time Roberts Conference goers feel, barreling down the highway toward some mysterious place called Flatwoods, toward some promised feast of country-fried steak. We all somehow make the distance, and in making, we admit our faith in the unbelievable precision and exactitude of a well-run conference, a clean, well-lighted program. And for those who go in disbelief, or for those who have lost faith somewhere along the way, *God, have mercy on the mariner*.

In retrospect, I have always remembered that day in the Lancaster Central Market as the celebration of St. James’ day. It must have had something to do with that ancient pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela, and the way we make all real journeys into pilgrimages. The rest of the day, after the market, was about a rodeo at Cowtown in South Jersey and Salem County peaches and South Jersey girls. There was

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**Colonel** *from previous page*

also a good swim in Lake Garrison where the amber colored water formed our memories ancient like a sepia toned photograph. We swam the afternoon and enjoyed reading the beach rules—"no profanity"—and had a Philadelphia water ice, and later we talked about place and knowledge of self and the way memory and landscape shape each other. The next day was Camden and Poets Row and the funeral we rolled into on Pyne Poynt—"RIP Shorty"—and finding Whitman's tomb (and Stoney's father's grave) and feeling the freedom of the road after the slums and discovering, like a grail, the best BBQ I have ever (and still ever) had—on the side of the road by the American Legion in Clayton, NJ. It was simple. It was a good and simple life. It was on the road with Stoney.

**April 2007**

## Beaumont Inn

"My horses aint hungry they wont eat your hay, so fare thee well darling I'm going away." Her voice hit the stones and made the foundations shudder. It was a line from a song and it came from inside their room in Goddard Hall. It was the Beaumont Inn, Harrodsburg, KY. The porch was already full. We all held a place under the stone pillars. They emerged with gin and tonics. We held our own glasses and some of them were filled with whiskey. The talk was a welcome to the feel of the place, the spring-grass color and texture rising from off the hills, the Beaumont and springs and pathways. Chad Horn eased his way into the crowd with a cigar and soon Stoney's guitar started and Sparrow was singing and everyone was alive in that moment, a moment that has lasted forever.

The next day, Bill Goodman interviewed Stoney for Kentucky Educational Television (KET). Goodman's first question: "Why should we know and why should we care about a writer named Elizabeth Madox Roberts from Springfield, KY." The light shifting over the graves on a hill above Springfield still in our memory from the day before, Becki reading from *Under the Tree*, the stained glass from Saint Catharine College, fording the creek, Nell and the ladies of Springfield and that fried chicken, and the whiskey and the smoke and the grass color and the harmony of "Long Black Veil" and the porch with Jeanne and the stones against grass and stones and our eyes fixed on a stone while over us the haunting sound, "Please don't take my sunshine away." Sometimes, when strangers ask us about our conference, about why we travel to Kentucky every April, all we feel compelled to do is sing. We just want to sing.

**April 1999**

Stoneback records the first meeting of the Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society in our Society Newsletter, March 2008, thus:

*That first meeting: having driven down separately from New York, I met, on a green-golden April morning in 1999, five of my graduate students at the prearranged rendezvous point on Brooklyn Bridge—the other Brooklyn Bridge, over the Kentucky River near Wilmore (a place sacred in my teenaged memories). I took them to lunch at the Beaumont Inn, where I had last dined, somewhat regularly, in 1959-1960. Over that lunch the Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society was founded. After that lunch, I drove them in the back of my pickup truck across the river ford and into the fields, over rough and rocky places on my farm, a wild wet ride up the hollow in the creekbed, the creek high after spring rains, and into overgrown pioneer bottomlands by the ruined foundation of the frontier homestead in the back forty. Then we changed into our town-clothes by the Little South Rolling Fork River that flows through my farm and drove over to Saint Catharine College to hold our brief sessions of six papers. There we met for the first time our gracious host, Terry Ward, who has been from the beginning rock-solid and indispensable to the work of the Roberts Society. Afterwards, we drove out to Saint Rose, and on a dirt-road pull-off by the creek below the Dominican priory beloved by Roberts, we had a fine late lunch of French cheeses and olives and assorted hors d'oeuvres. The local farmer, whom we had watched working, silhouetted against the sky on his far mythical hillside pasture, drove his tractor down and talked to us. It was a scene from a Roberts novel. Toward dusk, we left the enchanted Roberts country, drove through Lebanon and down to Bowling Green for the Robert Penn Warren Conference where we all had to speak the next day.*

**1968**

Vanderbilt University:

"No plow iron ever cut this-here hill afore, not in the whole time of man," Henry said.

"The time of man," as a saying, fell over and over in Ellen's mind. The strange men that lived here before our men, a strange race doing things in strange ways, and other men before them, and before again. Strange feet walking on a hillside for some purpose she could never think. Wondering and wondering she laid stones on her altar.

"Pappy, where do rocks come from?"

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“Why, don’t you know? Rocks grow.”

“I never see any grow. I never see one a-grownen.”

“I never see one a-grownen neither, but they grow all the same. You pick up all the rocks offen this-here hill and in a year there’s as many out again. I lay there’ll be a stack to pick up right here again next year.”

“I can’t seem to think it! Rocks a-grownen now! They don’t seem alive. They seem dead-like. Maybe they’ve got another kind of way to be alive.”

\* \* \*

We could go farther back in time, seeking the sacred source, and we would find there a way to be whole beyond confusion. We could go back to Penn’s Woods, the Pennsylvania frontier, and find Stonebacks and Brownbacks clearing the land, living myth into history, ordering the wearying infinities of Lancaster County, PA. We could follow, as Stoneback often beckons us, back to the numinous country of Strasbourg and the thirteenth century and his ancestors, the Steinbachs, those who shaped stones and set them high, like Erwin von Steinbach who built the cathedral in Strasbourg and Sabina his sister, sculpting rapt in earth magic. To the student of history, it is not surprising that a kid from Camden found Roberts, found stones a living wonder, rocks a measure of the time of man. The surprise really comes in the way he has brought Roberts alive to us all and led us, like pilgrims thirsty for the water of life, toward the stone altar of Roberts’ world.

It has been difficult to formulate a phrase or a sentence that sums up the impact H. R. Stoneback—Stoney—has had on each of us as individuals. Stoneback’s effort as the prime-mover of the Roberts Society and of Roberts scholarship is insurmountable. The current Roberts Renaissance owes its existence to Stoney’s efforts. A few basic facts: we will soon hold our 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference—all of our conferences have been organized and directed by Stoney; he has published numerous essays on Roberts and edited three collections of essays on Roberts—the first book length scholarship on Roberts in over forty years; he has pushed and published Roberts’ unfinished novel *Flood* and other unpublished material; he has focused on Roberts in numerous lectures and plenary addresses—some of which had audiences of more than a thousand; he has founded and been promoting as General Editor the Reading Roberts Series, which is devoted to the close reading and illumination of Roberts’ writing; he has written poems and songs for/about Roberts performed on stages from Penn’s Store to Eddie Montgomery’s to Italy, France, and all over the United States. In order to portray the extent of his efforts beyond a list of academic and artistic achievements, I asked past

Roberts Society Presidents and other key members of the society how they felt Stoney has shaped the Roberts Society and Roberts studies. This is what they wrote:

#### Jane Keller

(Roberts biographer, University of Baltimore)

F. Scott Fitzgerald and Zora Neal Hurston are but two essential writers who might have disappeared. They were *discovered* by people who knew better, and now we simply cannot imagine life without them. H. R. Stoneback has rescued Elizabeth Madox Roberts. Virtually singlehandedly. He knew better, knows better. He has done a lot of other great work. His campaign to reintroduce EMR might just be the most significant.

#### Steve Florczyk

(past President of EMRS, former Newsletter Editor, Louisiana State University)

One of the key things HRS ever did for the Society? Well, besides founding it, of course, I suppose what comes to mind is that he introduced us all to Roberts country and showed us how literature is a living thing. We’d drive to Kentucky reading aloud from “Sacrifice of the Maidens” and then deliver papers in the chapel that Roberts used for her setting. Or we’d be having a roadside picnic, and he would point out the view of the church that was the basis for St. Lucy’s in *The Time of Man*. Or we would be having Sunday supper in Springfield while listening to local high school students recite passages from Roberts’ work. Then we’d gather as a group and read poems at her grave in the whipping wind while contemplating the heavy stone slab that covers her final resting place and note without irony her famous line “I’m a-liven.” I’m always grateful to Stoney for showing us these things, and every April, no matter where I am, there is always a part of me in Kentucky.

#### Tina Iraca

(EMRS Secretary/Treasurer, former Newsletter Editor, SUNY-Dutchess)

Dr. Stoneback is the heart, soul, inspiration, and vision of the Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society. Like Emerson’s American Scholar, he is “Man Thinking . . . he is all . . . priest and scholar and statesman and producer and soldier.” Dr. Stoneback brought Roberts into the future when he created the EMR Society and took so many of us into the past so that we could “get at the truth,” as Emerson would say. Words fail when it comes to explaining the influence of Stoney on the Society—because his dedication to Roberts’ scholarship is profound and has touched many. Because of Stoney’s work, hundreds of new readers of Roberts’ writing have come to “some better place” as her beloved character Ellen Chesser from *The Time of Man*

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**Colonel** *from previous page*

would say. Stoney's gift in founding the EMR Society is a swirl of teaching and truth through words and song, always reminding us of Ellen Chesser's resolve: "the wisdom of the world is the dearest thing in life, learnen is, and it's my wish to get a hold onto some of that-there." Stoney's work in the Society has helped new and old readers of Roberts "get a hold onto some of that-there."

**William Boyle**

(past President of EMRS, University of Mississippi)

People rescue neglected writers all the time in a mercenary way, trying to build careers from the ashes of great "lost" artists, but what Dr. H. R. Stoneback has done for Elizabeth Madox Roberts is noble and pure and one of the great acts of literary citizenship of the 21st century. He's preached the good word of EMR far and wide. He's brought countless young scholars to her work and engaged them in important conversations. He's given her books new life because he believes she deserves to be read. For this and all of his other accomplishments as an exemplary literary citizen, I salute him.

**Nell Haydon**

(Director City of Springfield Main Street/Renaissance)

Dr. Stoneback has brought hundreds of scholars and students to Springfield to learn about and feel the life of Elizabeth Madox Roberts in her hometown. It has been a pleasure for this community to host so many and to share a small part of our lives with the young and old that come from all around the world. But, more importantly, Stoney and his students have taught the citizens of Springfield much about themselves and the lady writer that shared our town with the world! You all have given us so much!

**Rebecca Roberts (Becki) Owens**

(Grand-niece of Elizabeth Madox Roberts)

The notoriety and acclaim for Elizabeth Madox Roberts' work is more than anyone could have imagined in modern times. The hard work and dedication of Dr. Stoneback and the founding members of the EMR Society led to the zenith of recognition for Roberts when she was named as an inaugural member of the KY Writers Hall of Fame in 2013. The family of Elizabeth Madox Roberts is incredibly grateful to Dr. Stoneback for wiping away years of scholarly neglect by resurrecting and reexamining Roberts' extraordinary life and work.

**Gregg Neikirk**

(past President of EMRS, Westfield State University)

Stoneback is a stage-man, a performer. He knows how to put on a show. When that involves a 6-string, he's got all the songs written and the correct backup singers if he needs

them to bring in the crowds. When it involves something like the EMR Society, he knows what it takes to put on a show. You need a good writer not already celebrated by the common crowd (that's EMR) and who is a genuine artist—coming from a small KY town is pretty perfect too, since Stoneback developed a love for Kentucky over 50 years ago, and has built on that love of place every year since. His union with Sparrow, a true Kentucky girl who could've fit in her girlhood days into any EMR novel, made his love of Kentucky as a place nearly sacred to him. Of course, it was years ago too, when the Stoneback dissertation was written, that he made the way for the EMR Society, whether he knew it then or not. He knows how to put on a professional show, and he has done that with EMR: you need a group of aficionados to visit the source material (check, Pied Piper of SUNY NP emerges); you need a venue worthy of a literary conference concerning a Kentucky writer (check, there is a small and historic Catholic College within the small Kentucky town EMR hails from—and a place to rest and reflect before and after the paper sessions: the Beaumont Inn is one of those exceptional places which represents old Kentucky in many ways); you need a keynote speaker, program chairs, and national participants (check, the "Posse" as some would call it and good scholars from all over the country and the world learn about Stoneback's show and want in on it, bringing authentic and important original scholarship to the venue where new ideas are discovered and lifelong friendships are forged). I think Stoneback had this plan all along. He worked diligently over the years to see it materialize, and today we have what I think is a really fine show. He knows how to put one on.

\* \* \*

Because of his efforts to promote, publish work on, and illuminate Elizabeth Madox Roberts, and because of his extensive work on James Still, Jesse Stuart, Allen Tate, and Robert Penn Warren—and because of his singing and performing all over the state of Kentucky with his late-wife Sparrow—last year at Saint Catharine College during our Annual Conference, our Honorary President Dr. H. R. Stoneback was bestowed by the Commonwealth of Kentucky with the highest honor in the Commonwealth, that of the Honorable Order of Kentucky Colonels. James Spragens of Lebanon, Kentucky, presented the honor to Stoneback. It was Spragens who initiated and saw through the process of bestowing Stoneback this honor; we thank him very much. Kentucky Colonels (according to their website) are "unwavering in devotion to faith, family, fellowman and country." They are passionate leaders, proud and humble, gentle and strong, stalwart in their commitment to "support those in need and preserve" the "rich heritage" of Kentucky.

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Colonel Stoneback joins the ranks of other Kentucky Colonels such as Pope John Paul II, Ronald Reagan, Elvis Presley, and many others. We do not know if Elizabeth Madox Roberts had Stoney in mind when she wrote *The Great Meadow* but she too would be proud of our leader, H. R. Stoneback. He is not of the Boone kind—he is of a better kind who blazes trails and brings order to chaos.

And our leader has earned one more honor this past year that will not only be important for American letters, but may also give more national and international attention to Roberts. Stoney has recently been elected President of the International Ernest Hemingway Foundation and Society. He has been hard at work since the election results were counted, for he is now responsible for a society between 600-1,000 members in 49 states and 30 countries. Quite a task, given our own Roberts Society numbers, which average around 50-60. Given what he's done for the Roberts Society, we can only imagine how he will shape and bring new light to certain dark corners of the Hemingway world.

**Allen Josephs** (University of West Florida), Hemingway scholar and past President of the Hemingway Society and Foundation, feels Stoneback's election "cuts two ways." He writes:

In the first instance it signifies a return to an old Hemingway Society tradition, namely that the president be a leading Hemingway scholar. It is impossible to delve into Hemingway criticism without repeatedly encountering Stoneback's groundbreaking work, not least of which is his monumental study of Hemingway's frequently misunderstood masterpiece, *The Sun Also Rises*. His scholarly—and creative—reputation can only enhance the Society. At the same time Stoneback's presidency will mean a new direction for the Society, a more internationalist and

more eclectic positioning of the Society's affairs (Stoneback is involved in the leadership of several other societies, e.g., Imagism, Aldington, Elizabeth Madox Roberts). Above all Stoneback will return a traditional intellectual rigor and sense of responsibility to the Society and the Society's publications. The Hemingway Foundation and Society is in a highly unusual position since the Foundation owns some of the rights to unpublished Hemingway material, the only such situation I know of for American literary societies. It was only through cooperation between the Foundation and the Hemingway heirs that *True at First Light* or the scholarly version *Under Kilimanjaro* could be published. One can only hope for more such joint ventures in the future. I think H. R. Stoneback will seek to promote such projects and I believe he will enjoy the confidence of the Hemingways.

I agree with Josephs that Stoneback will continue to promote projects which illuminate and praise Hemingway, just as he has done and continues to do for Roberts.

**July 31, 2009**  
Highland, NY

The garden was alive. The rotting gate and fence posts were replaced, and the groundhog holes under the knotweed were plugged; new logs shored up the terracing. The tomato plants were bursting with green, dotted with yellow flowers. Garlic had been pulled from the earth and tied and hung now on the porch, leek seeds clipped and new seedlings taking root. It was August, but the weather was clear and blue. I had dreamed of a summer like this once, before I was old enough to know how weeds take hold, how sometimes the rains can make all green things rot and turn to mold. I walked the length of our garden under the sun sky and I heard a song, a sound of notes together, on the electric piano Stoney had recently bought. It was a Roland, and it had a choir function that made the keys come alive, reminded us of the angels singing in Kansas City just a year before.

"You remember that one singing and watching you?"

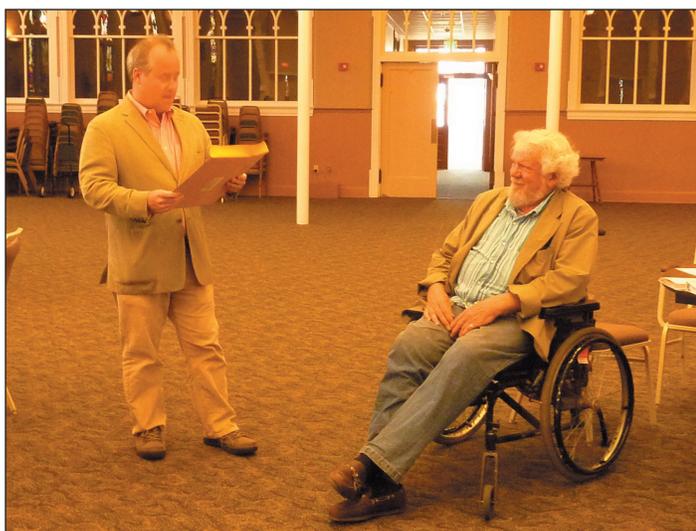
"The blond, yeah. And Bill's look on his face."

"All our looks on our faces. And remember the way you didn't want to and the way Josephs made you sing. Amazing Grace and I Love to Tell the Story and I Come and all of them. What Josephs said after. 'This is what he needs to do. He can't stop singing. It wouldn't be right.'"

And we all knew, far away and in the middle of the country, singing right there was exactly what she would have wanted us to do.

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*James Spragen presents H. R. Stoneback with the Honor of Kentucky Colonel*



*Colonel from previous page*

But I did not say all that in 2009, and it was only the sound of those keys on the piano that formed the rhythm of the garden. And I did not know the words to his new song, the one he made that summer. The garden became the sound, the bent leaves and vines hung over the idea, each step and thrust in soil became the music, the rhythm of the day. As I emerged from the lower garden, walking up steps beside the ancient carriage house, I heard him belt the words:

“Don’t stop looking for songs with tight harmony. Don’t stop making things to last for eternity”

When I heard those words it was like a flood came over me. I was drowned and tears were general. I knew the thing great writers want to get at. I felt the moment poets call epiphany. Months later, he sang that song in Kentucky at the Roberts Conference in 2010—the place we always return to like pilgrims after a long journey in strange lands. Everything had converged toward that moment in that place. “Sing it, oh darling sing it, sing it for me.” It was a great homage, because it was not just for Sparrow. It was for the world Sparrow wanted us to continue loving—and that world included Roberts and her country and the Roberts Society that had become a family.

It takes a person a long time to know what time is and where one fits in the rhythm of the world. When we are lucky enough to find a light in the darkness, a song in the chaos of sound, we never forget the holiness of the moment that gave us our first glimpse. And we keep showing others after that moment—because we feel it is all we can do—because we are desperate to give back something. Because we do not own any of it, not the songs, nor the gardens, nor the words, until we have given it away. All great writers prove this fact to us. But sometimes it takes a great person to show us *how* to give back. And for that, we owe everything to Stoney.

*2007 Elizabeth Madox Roberts Conference  
Goddard Hall Beaumont Inn  
Stoney & Sparrow*

*New Edition from page 4*

since everything begins and ends with landscape and *placescape*—the Roberts Society should invite Hesperus editors and artists to a future conference and give them a tour of Roberts’ actual country. Finally, about that green-tinted cloud-rolled sky on the cover of this edition, we wonder if they know what it means in Kentucky when the light gets bent, when the light gets green? Tornado watch.

**News & Notes****Help Spread the Word on Roberts**

Please request that your local libraries order copies of *Elizabeth Madox Roberts: Prospect & Retrospect* (Eds. Stoneback, Boyle, and Nickel, 2012); *Elizabeth Madox Roberts: Essays of Reassessment and Reclamation* (Eds. Stoneback and Florczyk, Wind Publications, 2008); and *Elizabeth Madox Roberts: Essays of Discovery and Recovery* (Eds. Stoneback, Camastra, and Florczyk, Quincy & Harrod Press, 2008). These volumes offer not only reprints of valuable touchstone articles but also the most recent essays on Roberts’ work as well as original pieces of writing by Roberts that have never before been published. The books are essential to the ongoing discussion about her life and work, and we hope that they will become available in libraries across the country for current and future readers alike. For more information regarding ordering, please visit <[www.emrsociety.com](http://www.emrsociety.com)>.

**Eddie Montgomery Steakhouse in Harrodsburg—Closed**

Within a month of the performance by Roberts Society members H. R. Stoneback, Gregg Neikirk, Adam Neikirk and the Elizabeth Madox Roberts Traveling Troubadours, Eddie Montgomery Steakhouse in Harrodsburg, KY closed its doors. The historical fact is of some significance: that the Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society sang at a great nightclub with a magnificent stage. We had fun listening to other performers and hearing Roberts’ own words set to music by H. R. Stoneback.

**EMR Panels at November 2013 SAMLA Convention in Atlanta, GA**

The Roberts Society was well represented this year at the SAMLA Convention in Atlanta, Georgia. **Jessica Nickel** (SUNY-New Paltz) chaired the **Elizabeth Madox Roberts: Prospect and Retrospect** Session with presentations by **Nicole**

*continued on next page*

**News & Notes** *continued*

**Stamant** (Agnes Scott College), **Jamie Stamant** (Texas A & M), **Chris Vecchiarelli** (SUNY-New Paltz), and **Jessica Nickel** (SUNY-New Paltz). **Matthew Nickel** (Misericordia University) chaired the **Roberts and Other Writers** Session with presentations by **Chris Paolini** (Independent Scholar), **Shawn Rubenfeld** (University of Idaho), **Amanda Capelli** (University of Louisiana at Lafayette), and **Matthew Nickel** (Misericordia University). **H. R. Stoneback** was featured on the **Music and Poetry** Session accompanied by **Gregg Neikirk** and **Adam Neikirk**. **Dan Pizappi** (SUNY-New Paltz) read from his fiction on the SAML A Fiction Writers Panel, chaired by **Shawn Rubenfeld** (University of Idaho).

**CFP: SAML A 2014 (Atlanta, GA; November 7-9)****Elizabeth Madox Roberts: Prospect & Retrospect**

Papers for this session may deal with all aspects of Roberts' work and life. Suggested topics include but are not limited to the following: Roberts and new work (particularly her posthumously published unfinished novel *Flood*); Roberts and her manuscripts; Roberts in the context of Southern literature; Roberts and Southern Agrarianism; Roberts' literary and stylistic influences (i.e., Synge, Hardy, Joyce, Homer, Hopkins, Beethoven, Pound); Roberts and religion; Roberts and Modernism; Roberts and the novel; Roberts as poet; Roberts as writer of short fiction; Roberts and Regionalism; Roberts and the politics of literary reputation; Roberts and feminism; and, Roberts and Kentucky. Abstracts should be 250 words and sent by June 1, 2014 to **Goretti Vianney-Benca** (Culinary Institute of America) at [gorettibenca@gmail.com](mailto:gorettibenca@gmail.com).

**Elizabeth Madox Roberts, the Earth, Environment, and Sustainability**

Papers for this session should deal with Elizabeth Madox Roberts, the Earth, Environment, and Sustainability. Topics may include but are not limited to the following: Roberts and Sense of Place, Roberts and Environmental Studies, Roberts and Sustainability, Roberts and Wendell Berry, Roberts and Regionalism, Roberts and Agrarianism, Roberts and the Southern Renaissance, Roberts and Gardening, Roberts and other Kentucky writers (e.g., C. E. Morgan, Robert Penn Warren, Allen Tate). Abstracts should be 250 words and sent by June 1, 2014 to **Amanda Capelli** (University of Louisiana at Lafayette) at [amc47@yahoo.com](mailto:amc47@yahoo.com).

**2013 EMR Society Award Winners:**

2013 Sparrow Memorial Award was given to: **Joe McNulty** (SUNY-New Paltz).

Donations to sustain the Memorial Awards program may be made at any time. Contact Tina Iraca, EMRS Treasurer

at [tina.iraca@gmail.com](mailto:tina.iraca@gmail.com), or send a check made out to Tina Iraca, with notation of amounts to be applied to the Sparrow Memorial Award and/or the Terry Ward Memorial Grant to: Tina Iraca, 16 Montgomery Street, Tivoli, NY 12583.

**Reading Roberts**

The Roberts Society published several volumes in 2012. The Reading Roberts Series now includes: a posthumously never before published work by Roberts, *Flood*, an unfinished novel edited by Vicki Barker; a collection of essays by past and present Society members on Roberts, *Elizabeth Madox Roberts: Prospect & Retrospect*, edited by H. R. Stoneback, William Boyle, and Matthew Nickel; and an anthology of poetry, *Kentucky: Poets of Place*, which includes poems by and about well-known Kentucky writers including Elizabeth Madox Roberts, Robert Penn Warren, Wendell Berry, H. R. Stoneback, Vivian Shipley, Dave Smith, and others.

**EMR Digital Archive**

Past issues of *The Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society Newsletter* are available online. Please go to [www.emrsociety.com](http://www.emrsociety.com) to browse the archives.

**Finding My Heritage Through Elizabeth Madox Roberts****Italia Brewer**

There is a side of me that I know nothing about. I was born and raised in New York. My mother comes from Naples, Italy and my father comes from Kentucky. They met after the war. While my mother was visiting America, she saw this big beautiful man. His name was James Brewer and he was just back from Germany and he was tall: different from the men in Naples.

My mother told me stories of how my grandfather, Powell Brewer, slept with a rifle under his bed, and she chided him and he amused her with his justifications—he would tell her that “a bear might come in at night.” Powell was a man of many wonders. He had a way with women. My grandmother, Maggie Dunn, was his second wife and was much younger than Powell. My father's half siblings were much older than my dad. I knew a lot about my Italian side but little about my Kentucky side, so I decided to go to a reunion with the Kentucky side of my family. There, I was impressed by Kentuckians, their dignity, their manners. It was different from other places I traveled, different than the pace in New York, and I liked it. I went to the graves my father visited every year and placed wreaths on stones, and I learned that the family farmed the land

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## High School, Oklahoma City, and EMR: New Discoveries

Jared Young

As an undergraduate student at SUNY-New Paltz, I was enrolled in Dr. H. R. Stoneback's freshmen honors class. When we read Elizabeth Madox Roberts' novel *The Time of Man*, I immediately felt Roberts' acute ability to invoke a sense of place. After that class with Dr. Stoneback, I've always told myself that if I become a teacher I will find a way to bring Roberts into my classroom. Last April, as I finished an MA in English, I was offered a teaching position as a high school instructor in Oklahoma City.

My time thus far at Capitol Hill High School has been eye-opening, and I attribute this feeling largely to the students. Located in the southwest part of the city, a location rich in Spanish and Mexican culture, the students are bright, outspoken, and eager to explore the world outside of what they are accustomed to. I decided to give my students several passages from Elizabeth Madox Roberts' *The Time of Man*. The students quickly recognized Roberts' sense of place. Destiny Smith wrote, "I felt like I was in the story but in the narrator's position, I could clearly see the setting." Yulisa Sandoval wrote about how she was "hearing Ellen's mother saying 'we ought to be agoen on.'" Natay Talley wrote, "the English was sort of broken, and this made me realize where I was."

Because Capitol Hill High School students are from the inner-city, Roberts' precise account of the Kentucky farming life also had an impact on the students. When I asked the students what they thought about Ellen Chesser's lifestyle, Destiny wrote that "they work really, really hard for low pay, but back then that meant a lot." Yulisa added that she liked "how [the story] focused on farming. I live in the city so it was interesting to see how farmers live." For some, Roberts conjured past memories. Natay revealed that she is "Seminole and grew up in Choctaw," a town located outside of Oklahoma City, which was especially known for its agriculture in the 1950s. She concluded, "the planting part [of *The Time of Man*] was really cool, plus I like to walk around barefoot, just like Ellen Chesser." The chance to bring Elizabeth Madox Roberts' *The Time of Man* into my class has been a wonderful opportunity. As a society member, it is always thrilling to bring Roberts' work into new territory, but the real joy comes from watching young students discover her for the first time.

## Notes on EMR's Hitherto Unknown Typescript of *Ginglen in the Wind*

H. R. Stoneback

I recently acquired the Roberts typescript of *Ginglen in the Wind* (as she originally entitled her third novel *Jingling in the Wind*), an item hitherto unknown to Roberts scholars. The physical state of the typescript is as follows: four "booklets," numbered I-IV, with each of the four folded manila covers bearing in pencil, in Roberts' hand, the title *Ginglen in the Wind*; each of the four manila covers is signed, in ink, "Elizabeth Madox Roberts." Within the covers are the familiar Roberts typed half-sheets (6 1/2 x 8 1/2 inches), the four "booklets" corresponding to chapters One through Four of the published version of the novel. (This idiosyncratic disposition of typed text is familiar to scholars who have worked with her papers at the Library of Congress.)

This typescript will serve, in the future, as a valuable resource for study of EMR's most neglected work. (In hundreds of papers over sixteen years of Roberts Conferences, for example, I can recall only two conference presentations that have dealt even peripherally with *Jingling in the Wind*.) When I have completed my study of this document, I will place the typescript in the appropriate repository of Roberts papers, where scholars will have access to the material. For now, it must suffice to note a few details: the typescript bears, in Roberts' hand, penciled insertions and marginal annotations; there are substantial differences between the typescript and the novel as published—some typescript passages are omitted from the published version, and other passages have been added. This typescript version ends approximately two-thirds of the way through the printed version, in chapter "Four" (corresponding to page 203 in the published novel).

Here's one key passage of the novel on which the typescript sheds some light. In both texts, there is an extraordinary repetition of the word "Spisserholt" in variant forms—19 repetitions in less than three pages: "Hisswords spoke out . . . 'Spisserholt, spisser, spisser, spisserholt!' Then 'Spiss, spiss,' whispered"; "Does he remember Spisserholt? Does he Spisserholt?" (*JITW* 199-200). The typescript wording is similar, with minor differences. In the typescript the Spisserholt motif is introduced in these words: "Do you remember Spisserholt, Spisserholt?" Inserted at this point is the *only* separate typed slip of paper included in the document and it reads: "Spisserholt, the forest where Faust first conjured the devil." In the published version, prompted by the slip of paper she inserted in her typescript, Roberts revises the sentence to read: "Does he remember Spisserholt, the wood where Faust . . . ? Spisserholt?" (199). Clearly, Roberts wants to be certain that the reader gets the significance of Spisserholt and the devil-conjuring that took place at "Spisser's Wood" or "Spisser Holt"

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or “der Spesser Wald;” so she inserts the “where Faust” in the published version to guide the reader who may not be familiar with the famous place-name and symbolic landscape. But like a good modernist, after “where Faust” she omits “first conjured the devil” and rests content to let the measure of what the reader gets be the measure of what is brought to the reading. *Faust* is enough. Even more remarkably, she *renders* the devil-conjuring through sound, in Faulknerian or Joycean High Modernist fashion: all those repetitions of “spiss,” all those *sinister whispered Hissswords* make incarnate on the page the unnamed conjuring of the devil.

Other matters illuminated by the typescript include “The Story of the Eminent Clergyman” (thus titled in both typescript and published version), and how the clergyman’s story of Adam in Eden echoes Chaucer’s “The Monk’s Tale.” One might argue that *Ginglen in the Wind* is Roberts’ tribute to Edith Rickert, the eminent medievalist (co-author/editor of the landmark 8-volume Manly & Rickert *Text of the Canterbury Tales*). Rickert, known as “an amazing, stimulating teacher” at the University of Chicago where she taught Roberts her Chaucer, remains my candidate for the least known major influence on Roberts (as I have argued in detail elsewhere: my keynote address at the 2008 Roberts Conference, forthcoming in my *Composition of Place: Selected Essays on Elizabeth Madox Roberts*). And Rickert’s influence on Roberts goes beyond Chaucer—she was a poet, a novelist, author of the best kind of regional fiction, infused with an authentic sense and spirit of place; and perhaps an exemplary model of the writer’s vocation for Roberts in the remarkably disciplined and productive years of her short career. (Rickert published ten books in eight years before she turned 30 years of age.)

An anecdote: some years ago an undergraduate student who had run across a reference somewhere to *Ginglen in the Wind* asked me: “Was Roberts really such a terrible speller?” I showed that student two dictionaries in my office that gave as the etymology for *Jingling*: “Middle English *ginglen*.” I told her that was how Chaucer spelled it and Roberts’ book was in part a modern *Canterbury Tales*. A week or so later I passed her on campus and, excited, she stopped to tell me she’d found *ginglen* and *gingling* in Chaucer. “Why did she change it to *jingling*?” Guessing, I said the publishers probably wanted it that way. “But doesn’t that,” she said, “trash the key Chaucer allusion?” “Certainly downplays it,” I said. And maybe, I would now add, it downplays a tribute to Rickert. What we now know from this typescript is that Roberts firmly inscribed *Ginglen* throughout the document—no hesitation, no options, no modern variant. I’ll give the last word to the unsigned Viking Press blurb on the back dust jacket cover of the first edition of *Jingling in the Wind*: “The title is from Chaucer, and one of the amazing chapters of the book is a modern Canterbury pilgrimage, in which a dozen passengers in a stalled motor-bus sit by the roadside and exchange stories. But the stories are not always what they seem, nor is Chaucer the only author parodied.”

## Roberts Online

### Matthew Nickel

A recent online search for the name “Elizabeth Madox Roberts” revealed some interesting and exciting results. Some of those results illustrate worldwide enthusiasm for Roberts’ work, some quote her poetry and fiction. One, a website celebrating and preserving the Ozarks, quotes Roberts’ poem “Strange Tree.” The following are worth mentioning.

### Earl Hamner’s blog, *You Me and the Lamp Post* (<http://earlhamner.blogspot.com>)

Last year the Roberts Society honored Earl Hamner with *The Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society Award for Southern and Appalachian Writing*. Readers will remember in our last newsletter (2013) three articles by H. R. Stoneback on Hamner and the *NBC Radio Theater*. Hamner, the creator of one of the most popular shows on television, *The Waltons*, wrote to Stoneback, “in very compelling terms about how *The Time of Man* is the one book that had the greatest influence on his life and work.” In July last year, Hamner posted an article on his own blog about Roberts’ influence on his own writing; in his post, he admits that Roberts “was and remains the most important person” in his career. Hamner’s words about Roberts, *The Time of Man*, and his own process of discovery are wonderful to have, and we are grateful for what Hamner wrote about the efforts of our society.

### *Virginia Quarterly Review* ([vqronline.org](http://vqronline.org))

Some of you may have known this for a time, but it is worth reporting. The *Virginia Quarterly Review* has uploaded its archives, and one can find essays about or including Roberts. A chance search found me this paragraph by Tate:

The first-rate Southern poets of the twenties and thirties were few: Ransom, Warren, Davidson, and—as a poet she is unknown today—Elizabeth Madox Roberts. The preoccupation with the obsessive Southern subject, the past in the present, is obviously a social and historical interest, best approached through the form that Henry James elevated to the rank of true history. If the Southern Renaissance has not been a flash in the pan, it will continue in the Southern novel.

This passage was included in Tate’s “Faulkner’s ‘Sanctuary’ and the Southern Myth.” Warren’s “Not Local Color” is also on the website.

## Conference Report 2013

### Jessica M. Nickel

The XV Annual Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society Conference took place April 20-22, 2013. Our conference began with a gracious reception at Kentucky Lit, hosted by Chad Horn. Matthew Nickel, President of the Society, welcomed us at the Beaumont Inn, and then **H. R. Stoneback**, Honorary President of the Roberts Society, followed with his keynote address: "More Roberts Connections: Earl Hamner, Cormac McCarthy, C. E. Morgan & Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings." We enjoyed a wonderful meal topped off with the presentation of the Sparrow Memorial Award. Later in the evening, members of the Roberts Society performed at Eddie Montgomery's Steakhouse in Harrodsburg.

On Sunday, conferees enjoyed an old-fashioned tent meeting and hymn sing at Penn's Store, visited Roncevaux Farm, and then attended Kentucky Writers Day. In the afternoon, the Society was honored at Mordecai's Restaurant by Mayor John W. Cecconi, The Springfield City Council, Nell Haydon and Main Street Renaissance, and the Ladies of Springfield, and we were entertained by an extraordinary play written by Gregg Neikirk titled *Coming Home: The Elizabeth Madox Roberts Story* and performed by Jennifer Warren. Conference participants were then given a tour of Elenores, Roberts' house, hosted by Joan Hamilton.

On Monday morning the Society was greeted by President William D. Huston and Leah Bayens at Saint Catharine College. Academic papers were presented throughout the day by many new and veteran Roberts scholars. The conference ended with a poetry reading at Roberts' grave.

**Session 1: Bill Slavick** (U of So. Maine): Letters from the Little Country; **Jane Eblen Keller** (U of Baltimore): "Something of Myself": Reading from the preliminary draft of the biography of Elizabeth Madox Roberts; **Gisèle Sigal** (U de Pau/IUT de Bayonne): Between Permeability and Peculiarity: the Poetics of Gender in *Jingling in the Wind*;

**Session 2: Adam Neikirk** (Indep Scholar): Notes Toward a Roberts Concordance; **Gregg Neikirk** (Westfield State U): You Didn't Make That World Out of Chaos By Yourself: Roberts Characters and their Reliance on Animals; **Jessica Conti** (SUNY-New Paltz): Modern Prophets: Elizabeth Madox Roberts & Flannery O'Connor; **Matthew Nickel** (SUNY-New Paltz): Strange Gods: Elizabeth Madox Roberts & T. S. Eliot

**Session 3: Leah Bayens** (Saint Catharine C): Wendell Berry Farming Project; **Jane Dionne** (Independent Scholar): Teaching Guide for *The Time of Man*; **Jerry Salyer** (Jefferson Comm and Tech C): "Beyond St. Lucy": Saint Rose Parish and the Springfield Dominicans; **H. R. Stoneback** (SUNY-New Paltz): *The Time of Man* on the NBC Radio Theater: 1950

**Session 4a: Christopher Paolini** (Indep Scholar): Localizing Legends: Songs of Love and Place in Elizabeth Madox Roberts' *Song in the Meadow*; **Chris Vecchiarelli** (SUNY-New Paltz): *The Time of Man*: A Romantic Quest for Identity; **Jared Young** (SUNY-Albany): Roberts and Kerouac: Self-Awareness and the Traveling God in *Black Is My Truelove's Hair* and *On the Road*; **Patrick Skea** (SUNY-New Paltz): Wanderlust and Pilgrimage: An Examination of the Phenomenon of Travel in *The Time of Man* and *On the Road*

**Session 4b: Benjamin Wallin** (Nyack C): Childhood Imagination in Elizabeth Madox Roberts' *Under the Tree*; **Shawn Rubinfeld** (U of Idaho): Deconstructing Control and Considering Chaos: Pattern and Variation in the Poetry of EMR; **Jessica Kimmel** (Indep Scholar): God Lives in my Ovaries: Roberts' Bombshell Nuns of "The Sacrifice of the Maidens"; **Steven Siegelski** (SUNY-New Paltz): Boundaries of the Self and Mystic Visions in *The Time of Man*

**Session 5a: Lou Reid** (SUNY-New Paltz): Tracing Myth and Threading the Story in *The Time of Man* and *The Great Meadow*; **Jennifer Dellerba** (SUNY-New Paltz): Sense of Place in Roberts' Short Fiction and Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio*; **Joseph McNulty** (SUNY-New Paltz): Roberts and Frost: A Momentary Stay Against Confusion—*Under the Tree*; **Goretti Vianney-Benca** (Culinary Institute): Looking in the Mirror: Female Self-Esteem in Elizabeth Madox Roberts

**Session 5b: Taylor Steinberg** (SUNY-New Paltz): Cultivation in *The Time of Man*: An Analysis of the Ritualism of the Human Experience; **Alex Pennisi** (SUNY-New Paltz): "I'm Ellen Chesser and I'm a-liven": Achieving Selfhood through Language in Elizabeth Madox Roberts' *The Time of Man*; **Andrew Limbong** (Indep Scholar): And You May Ask Yourself, "How Did I Get Here?": New-World Expectations vs. American Reality in *The Great Meadow*; **Daniel J. Pizappi** (SUNY-New Paltz): Folksong and Pastoral Symphony: The Orchestration of Elizabeth Madox Roberts' *The Great Meadow*

**Finding my Heritage** *from page 11*

and worked hard but lived long lives. It was beautiful land, and it was sad to know it had been sold. He had told me he wanted to go back, buy land again, and live out his life there. Of course, it never happened; his life was cut short by a heart attack on November 8, 2001. He was very distressed over 9-11 and it brought back many flashbacks of the war; he had earned the bronze star for being a reconnaissance spy and throwing a flare into a pill box. Others said he volunteered for the mission, because he was from Kentucky, knew how to traverse land in stealth.

One recent morning, I was making the bed and there was a movie on called *The Great Meadow*. As I listened, the dialogue was speaking to my ancestry: travelers from Virginia going to Kentucky. I heard them mention Powell Mountain and I thought about my grandfather named Powell. Subsequently, I obtained a copy of Elizabeth Roberts' novel *The Great Meadow*, and I immersed myself in the wilderness that drew the settlers there. I was moved by passages like the following:

“Yea, it is a good land, the most extraordinary that ever I knew. Meadow and woodland as far as eye can behold. Beauteous tracts in a great scope, miles. A fine river makes a bound to it on the north, and another fine river flows far to the west, another boundary. To the east is a boundary of rugged mountains. And set above the mountains is a great cliff wall that stands across the way. Yea, you would know you had come to the country of Caintuck when you saw that place. . . .”

“The Author of Nature has point-blank made a promise

land,” Thomas said. “A place fitted to nurture a fine race, a land of promise.”

I found that beauty in Kentucky. I remember looking over a field my father pointed out to me, which he said was an old tobacco field. It had a special beauty to it of its own accord.

In college, I studied English Literature and received a degree in secondary education. There are books that stand out to me such as Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, which tells of a young girl and her life through womanhood. Similarly, in *The Great Meadow*, an innocent girl sees the world through an innocent mind, and I experience the way in which she reconciles the harsh realities of the life she has chosen through love. She has to make decisions based on her life and her child's survival and she questions whether she has chosen righteously. It has a Wordsworthian concept to it, because it is through innocence that she perceives her reality and thinks only of its pure nature. She has no contrivances or self agendas. She only wants to do what is right and good. What I see as Diony's pantheistic spirituality, that we are all one and interconnected, makes her want to do the right thing in the greater scheme of things. Yet, she refers to the contradiction of her religious law and legal law and tries to reconcile the two. She tries to do the right thing, which she is so wont to do. I identify with Elizabeth Madox Roberts' depiction of a girl growing into a woman. Her destiny is affirmed by senses she feels come to life by the beautiful manifold the Lord has lain before her while trying to stay alive. I was there with her connecting to a past I never knew, but love, because I am Kentucky too.

**An “Act of Piety”: Cowley's Calculus****Matthew Nickel**

The recently published volume, *The Long Voyage: Selected Letters of Malcolm Cowley, 1915-1987*, includes high praise by Malcolm Cowley for Elizabeth Madox Roberts' writing. One of the more interesting letters about Roberts is to Robert Penn Warren, August 30, 1961, in which Cowley expresses how he has “been disturbed for a long time by the fact that nobody . . . seems to remember Elizabeth Madox Roberts in print.” He laments how the “new generation of college students” is ignorant of her writing, and he calls it a “scandalous situation, considering that her best work deserves a place *above* the best of Willa Cather, for example” (my emphasis, 554).

Followings his statement on Roberts, Cowley mentions to Warren that, “With the warm cooperation of Marshall

Best,” he has persuaded Viking to reprint *The Time of Man*. Then he writes: “At least that will give professors a chance to place it on their list of assigned reading—if the professors themselves have heard about it. [...] To give it a fair chance, it needs an introduction by someone who can speak with authority, preferably a fellow Kentuckian, and most preferably by yourself. Could you perform that act of piety?” (554). Although I cannot find among the recently published volumes of selected letters by Warren a response to Cowley about his request, Warren clearly accepted: his act of devotion: “Life is from Within” appeared in print less than two years later and still graces the University of Kentucky Press edition of *The Time of Man*. Did Cowley then re-introduce Warren to Roberts? I doubt it—she mattered too much to Warren, and that is probably why Cowley asked Warren in the first place. But the effect was striking: Warren's novel *Flood* (which he began just as he finished his essay on Roberts) certainly echoes Roberts' work, particularly Roberts' unfinished *flood* novel (see *EMRS Newsletter* No. 14: 2013).

## “Delicious Coolness . . . Near to the Ground”: Elizabeth Madox Roberts on James Still

H. R. Stoneback

I have written elsewhere on the connections between James Still and Elizabeth Madox Roberts (e.g. *Kentucky Humanities* Vols.1-2:2001; the EMR Newsletter 2008); and I have mentioned in various keynotes and conference papers Still’s great admiration for Roberts and the intensity with which he spoke of her work in our conversations over the years. Yet the following piece of evidence regarding Roberts’ admiration of Still’s work has been overlooked. On the back flap of the dust jacket of *Song in the Meadow*, under the heading “A first novel by a young Kentucky poet: *River of Earth*, James Still,” we find these words signed by Roberts: “In reading, one is delighted first by the delicious coolness of the humor . . . One is never to be deceived by the delicacy of the repast offered. One is near to the ground and interpretation comes by the way of the minutiae of a little boy’s gaze; but all the largeness of life is there.”

In addition, there is this happy coincidence, given the

recent connections between the Roberts Society and the Rawlings Society. Underneath the blurb by Roberts, we find Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings on *River of Earth*: “A piece of perfection . . . It seems to me to rate a permanent place in American literature.” Conference papers on Rawlings, Roberts, and Still—anyone?

*Elizabeth Madox Roberts Conference 2013  
Saint Catharine College*



## *The Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society*

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## **Mission Statement**

The Elizabeth Madox Roberts Society seeks to promote scholarship in the work of Elizabeth Madox Roberts and to encourage the teaching of her literature. Membership is open to all who love Roberts. We are a national organization, but we are always interested in Kentucky membership and establishing a liaison with members in the Springfield area in particular. Anyone interested in membership can contact President Matthew Nickel at <[mattcnickel@gmail.com](mailto:mattcnickel@gmail.com)>.