

## The Horace Collection at Northwestern University

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The Horace Collection at Northwestern University is an extensive collection of Horace editions, translations, commentaries, and paraphrases, along with books about Horace, comprising over 2,000 volumes and housed in the Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections on the Evanston campus. It is one of the largest collections of Horace material in the world. The collection was acquired in 1955 from the estate of Stephen Hurley, a prominent Chicago lawyer and political figure. The collection is very much the product of Hurley's love of Horace and his indefatigable collecting efforts.

Hurley was born in 1892 in Tenney, Minnesota. He was educated first at St. Thomas College in St. Paul, and then at Catholic University, from which he received his Bachelor's and Master's degrees. At some point in his education a teacher instilled in him a love of Horace, though sources are not able to be more specific than that. He received his LL.B. at Georgetown University in 1914, and was admitted to the Illinois Bar. After working briefly in Quincy, he settled in Chicago and rose to prominence in the Chicago legal community, serving as president of the Chicago Bar Association from 1944 to 1945, and co-founding the firm of Hurley & Simmons in 1940. He also was a member of the American Bar Association's House of Delegates from 1944 to 1951.

Hurley served as Chairman of the Selective Service Legal Advisor Boards of Cook County from 1940 to 1947 and upon the termination of his service there, he was appointed to the Chicago Civil Service Commission, during the administration of reformist Mayor Martin Kennelly. He was promptly elected president, and it is in this role that he is best remembered in Chicago history. During his tenure he fought the Chicago political machine and removed over 12,000 positions from the patronage roles, placing them under civil service. He briefly resigned in 1954, frustrated by constant interference from City Council, and possibly by Kennelly's inability or unwillingness to protect him, but Kennelly persuaded him to stay on. Hurley's success raised the ire of the machine, and was a major factor in the slating of Richard J. Daley, then City Clerk, in the 1955 mayoral primary election. Though Daley (along with all the mayoral candidates) had promised to keep Hurley on, Hurley clearly understood what working under Daley would mean, and submitted his resignation the day after Kennelly's defeat in the primary.

While pursuing his legal and public activities, Hurley managed to assemble a sizable book collection. "Were I the master of my days," he noted in a 1939 speech to the Chicago Literary Club, "I would have me a quiet library as a haven of refuge from the harassments of the outer world."<sup>1</sup> Among the authors he loved were Montaigne, Jonson, Izaak Walton, Steele, Sterne (especially the *Sentimental Journey*), Thackeray, Thoreau, Gissing, Twain (selectively), Austen, and Mary Webb, but Horace clearly had pride of place in his

affections and collection. His Horace collection began with a single seventeenth-century volume found in a Clark Street bookstore, and by the late 1930s it had attained about the same size and scope as at his death. The three surviving talks Hurley gave to the Chicago Literary Club and Chicago Classical Club all date from the late thirties, before his entry into public service, and point to this period as the pinnacle of his book-collecting activities. It is tempting to surmise that the responsibilities Hurley undertook during the last fifteen years of his life left little time for his Horatian "haven of refuge," and that after his resignation from the Civil Service Commission, he was looking forward to spending more time with his book collection. But that was not to be; on May 10, less than a month after that resignation became effective, he died of a heart attack on a train trip back from Seattle. He was remembered as someone who was firm in his integrity and sense of duty, but also possessing a warm personality with a ready sense of humor. When attending the American Bar Association conventions, his hotel room became a gathering place for lawyers from all over the country, attracted "by the personality of their host?that of a modest, courageous, thoughtful, kind and generous gentleman."<sup>2</sup> He was the sort of man to whom Horace's poetry must most naturally have appealed.

After Hurley's death the Horace collection was offered to Northwestern University for \$10,000. It came to the attention of three professors: Carl Roebuck, Chair of the Classical Language Department; Alfred Dorjahn, John Evans Professor of Latin Languages and Literature; and Virgil Heltzel, Professor of English, and a Renaissance specialist. Roebuck, in a letter to University Librarian Jens Nyholm, noted the "obvious desirability of keeping such an excellent collection in the Chicago area,"<sup>3</sup> and argued that the strength of the collection in English translations over the centuries would support research on the influence of classical culture on English literature. Nyholm was intrigued but lacked the funds, and began contacting donors he thought might be interested in supporting this purchase. He found one in Meyer Kestnbaum, president of Hart, Schaffner & Marx and special assistant to President Eisenhower, who was a long-time friend of the Northwestern University Library's Special Collections. Kestnbaum continued his involvement with the collection following the initial purchase and funded several additional purchases. There were a handful of items from Hurley's collection that did not come to Northwestern, most notably a copy of *The Reliques of Father Prout*, a popular mid-nineteenth century collection of essays, with a substantial chapter on Horace, that had been owned by Abraham Lincoln. Northwestern also seems to have sold a number of duplicates, but for the most part, the collection remains as Hurley left it.

The range of the collection is impressive, with printed books ranging from the fifteenth to the twentieth century. The oldest item is a single leaf from an eleventh-century manuscript of the *Epodes*. (Special Collections also owns a fifteenth-century manuscript of the *Ars Poetica*, but this was acquired much earlier). Seven incunabula were part of the collection as acquired from Hurley's estate. The oldest of these is a 1482 commentary on the *Odes* by Cristoforo Landino, published by Antonio Miscomini, followed by a 1485 edition of the works with scholia published in Milan by Antonius Zarotus. The most remarkable incunabulum is probably the 1498 volume published by Johann Grüninger of Straßburg with commentary by Jacob Locher, containing 167 woodcuts, a number of them hand-colored. These are all housed with the other incunabula in the Special Collections Department rather than with the Horace Collection itself.

Given the riches of the collection, a mention of only a handful of highlights from the succeeding centuries will have to suffice. From the sixteenth century are ten Aldines (publications of the great Venetian fifteenth-century publisher Aldus Manutius and his sons), including the rare first edition of 1501. (Some of these are housed with Special Collections' other Aldines rather than with the Horace Collection). Six editions from the great French publishing family of Estienne (or Stephanus) span the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Other highlights from the seventeenth century include four editions by the great Dutch publisher Elzevier, the first duodecimo edition of Ben Jonson's translation of the *Ars Poetica* in its original leather binding, and two editions of the Horatian emblem-book of Otto van Veen (plus one edition from the

eighteenth century). Van Veen's book intersperses quotations from Horace with moralistic woodcuts, quotations from classical texts, and other glosses designed to illustrate that particular quotation. From such editions as these one can observe the spread of classical literary texts in the Renaissance: the Aldines and the houses of Estienne and Elzevier were the leading publishers of classical texts in their eras, Jonson was a poet greatly influenced by Horace who did much to extend Horace's influence in English letters, and the emblem-books were an important form of popular literature in their day.

The more recent holdings contain a plethora of editions, common and rare, and again, mention of only a couple of examples of fine printing will have to suffice. A seven-volume edition of the *Odes* and *Epodes* published by the Bibliophile Society in 1901 includes extensive modern commentary and a number of engravings done either by, or under the supervision of, Howard Pyle - one of which is signed in pencil by that artist. A volume Hurley was especially fond of was *Echoes from the Sabine Farm*, a collection of translations and adaptations of selected *Odes* and *Epodes* by Eugene Field and his brother Roswell. Only one hundred copies of the 1891 original edition were printed, thirty on Japanese paper, the other seventy on handmade paper. The Japanese paper edition boasts one poem handwritten on a flyleaf by each of the translators. The Horace Collection contains a copy of each of these two editions. One of Eugene Field's adaptations, of *Ode* I.1, is entitled "Maecenas in Chicago," and is replete with references to Marshall Field, Joseph Medill and other Chicago worthies. This particular poem was omitted when the volume was reprinted a couple of years later. Hurley seems to have particularly enjoyed Eugene Field's work; the collection also contains a single-page Field manuscript, which contains a translation of one of the *Odes*.

In acquiring the Horace Collection, Northwestern University transformed one man's passion, fueled by a now-forgotten teacher, into a rich resource documenting the influence and reception of classical antiquity throughout modern times.

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[1.](#) Stephen Hurley, "Quiet Please," Manuscript of talk given to the Chicago Literary Club, 1939, Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections, Northwestern University.

2. William H King, Jr., "Stephen Edward Hurley, 1892-1955," *American Bar Association Journal* 41 (July 1955): 632.

3. Carl Roebuck to Jens Nyholm, 11 December 1955, Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections, Northwestern University.

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