

THE FIRST ALCUIN SOCIETY WAYZGOOSE

Eric L. Swanick

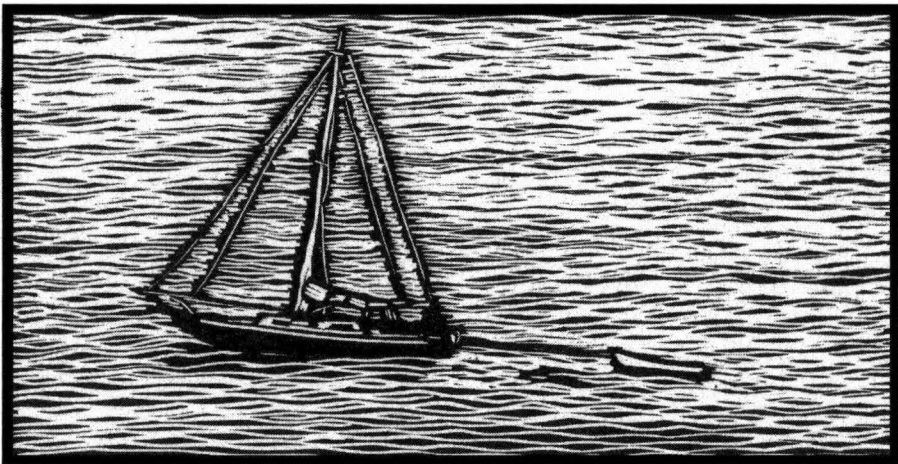
THE WAYZGOOSE, the first organized by the Alcuin Society and so named the Alcuin Wayzgoose was held at the Vancouver Public Library Central Branch, located in downtown Vancouver on October 30, 2004 from 10 a.m. until 3 p.m. The room had been set up the evening before so that when those exhibiting or demonstrating or displaying came early that morning they could go directly to their area and set up. At 10 a.m. as one entered the room, the Alcuin Society offered greetings and the opportunity to become a member, and from there you could move around the circumference of the room viewing each exhibitor/press and to discuss with them their various offerings, plans etc. There was the opportunity to view three displays. In the centre of the room were three demonstrations. The unofficial count for the day showed 658 visitors, yes 658 visitors, who came to view the work of sixteen private presses, to view three demonstrations of bookbinding, letterpress printing and papermaking, to view displays from Simon Fraser University, University of British Columbia and Vancouver Public Library and to talk “booktalk.” It was one grand day.

The concept of a Wayzgoose or printers’ get-together is not a new one, but was the first to be held in Vancouver. Many book artisans and book artists are familiar with the annual Wayzgoose convened in Grimsby, Ontario; it has been held for over twenty-five years. The Wayzgoose sponsored by the Gaspereau Press in Kentville, Nova Scotia recently celebrated its fifth birthday. And earlier this year, the Dawson Room in Dalhousie University held its first Wayzgoose. The concept of a Wayzgoose deals



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with printing and often goes beyond printing to include the bookarts and often more. The initiative for the Alcuin Wayzgoose sprung out of a desire to showcase letterpress printing, to demonstrate some of the constituent parts of bookmaking and to reflect the growing interest in the book arts. The first step began with a submission for such an event to the Alcuin Society's Program Committee chaired by Gina Page. This proposal was drafted by Rollin Milroy of Heavenly Monkey [Press] who subsequently joined the Committee. Other members who later joined to form a separate Wayzgoose Committee included some members of the Alcuin Society's Antiquarian Book Roadshow. Initial contact was made with the various exhibitors (i.e. the various presses all of whom produced at least part of their work in letterpress; several worked solely in letterpress) and the three demonstrators a list of all participants is provided at the conclusion of article. Agreements were signed, and as the 30th of October approached, an advertising and marketing campaign was launched which included the distribution of attractively designed broadsides and handbills. The work on these was done by Granville Island based Black Stone Press operated by David Clifford. These broadsides and handbills were distributed throughout the lower mainland and parts of Vancouver Island by the Alcuin Society and by various participants and friends. A press kit prepared by Rollin Milroy, a coveted item in itself, was distributed to the media. This well-illustrated kit profiled each press along with contact notes and printing information. This kit and further lobbying resulted in several announcements in the media and during the morning



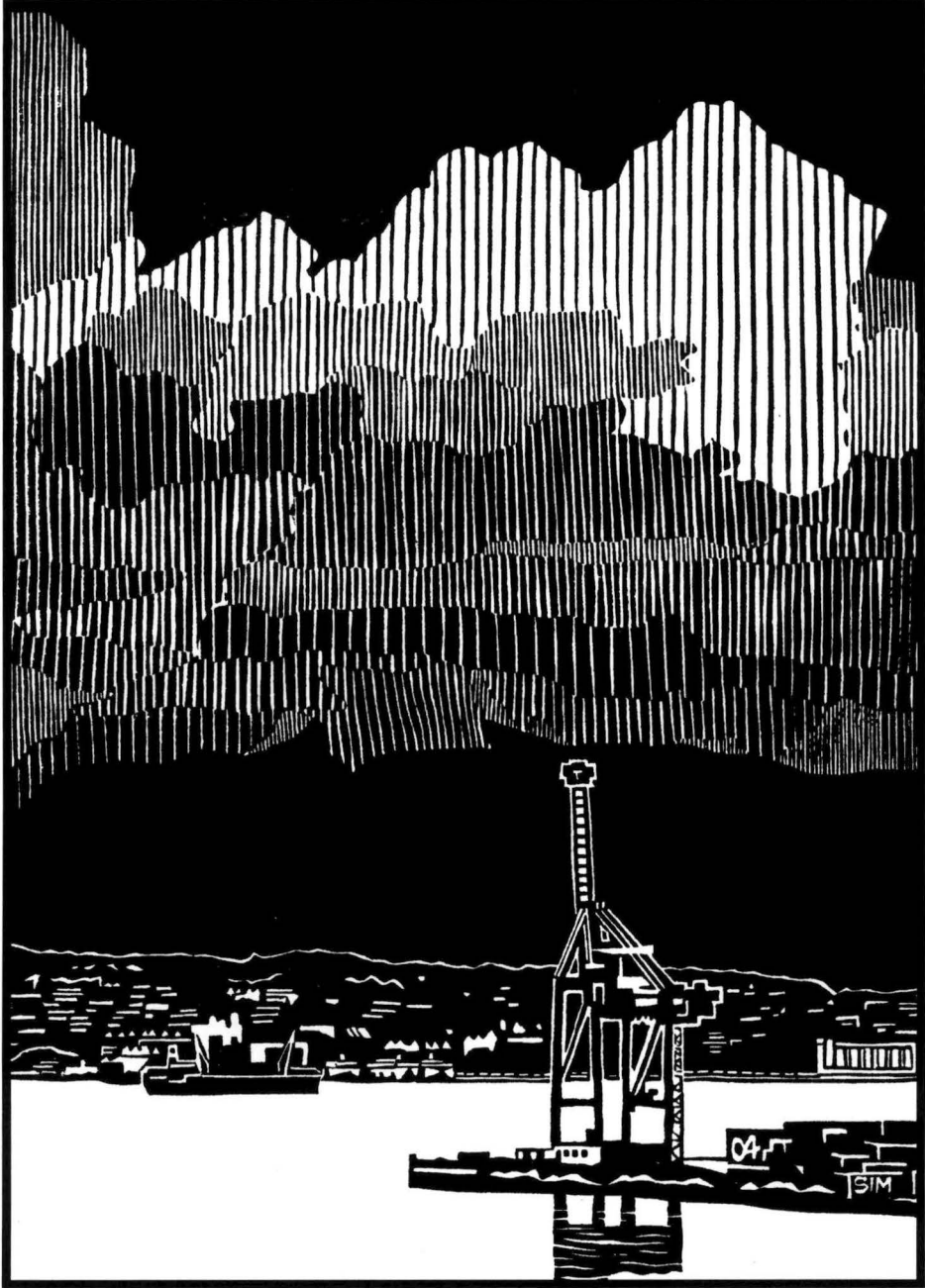
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of the event, Anik See and Rollin Milroy, both printers, were interviewed by Paul Grant on the CBC's early morning program. The general consensus was that this very fine interview was timely, and the message reached a broad audience.

Following the event, all exhibitors/demonstrators and a few others received a brief questionnaire the purpose of which was to elicit feedback for a possible future Wayzgoose and possible improvements. The general "complaint", if that word applies here, was the need for more time for "schmoozing." All participants wanted more time to discuss happenings in the trade, to communicate with fellow printers and fellow book artists. The other recommendations/suggestions (mostly house-keeping) will be considered in the fullness of time. A formal meeting of several members of the Alcuin Wayzgoose Committee took place to discuss the event, and to consider the results of the questionnaire. The Committee recommended and received the Alcuin Society's Board approval for another Alcuin Wayzgoose to be held on Saturday 22 October 2005 at the Vancouver Public Library, Central Branch. In conclusion, our collective thanks to all those who made this first Alcuin Wayzgoose such a grand success the public, the participants, the members of the Committee and the Government of British Columbia.

The exhibitors (presses) were: Barbarian Press, Charles van Sandwyk Fine Arts, Cotton Socks Press, Cowan & Tetley, De Walden Press, Les Éditions Lucie Lambert, Fox Run Press, Frog Hollow Press, Greenboathouse Books, Heavenly Monkey, High Ground Press, (m)Öthêr Tõñgué Press, Papermakers Press, Pie Tree Press, Robert R. Reid, and students from the Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design. Demonstrations included bookbinding by the BC Book Arts Guild, represented by Gina Page and Terry Rutherford; letterpress printing by Isto Press, operated by Stuart Isto; and papermaking by Reg Lissel Handmade Paper. Displays were offered by the Alcuin Society, and the Special Collections of Simon Fraser University, University of British Columbia and the Vancouver Public Library. Alcuin Wayzgoose Committee members included: Susan Andrews, Helena Jehnichen, Rollin Milroy, Gina Page, Don Polak, Jim Rainer, Kate Russell and Eric Swanick.

Eric L. Swanick is Head of Special Collections at Simon Fraser University, and a Board Member of the Alcuin Society.



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