

THE SCOTCH BARD

ROBERT BURNS AS POET & PERSON

Featuring the collection of Charles Bradley



January 25 - March 22, 2017

PHILBRICK RARE BOOK ROOM | PROVIDENCE ATHENÆUM

GALLERY GUIDE

This exhibition is generously sponsored by Susan Jaffe Tane.



Robert Burns (1759 - 1796)

Robert Burns was born in Ayrshire, Scotland, where he grew up in poverty, toiling on his father's farm. He also received an excellent education from his father, who taught all of his children reading, writing, arithmetic, and geography. Burns' legacy of songs, poems, and letters has earned him recognition as Scotland's greatest poet, and the greatest promoter of Scottish history and culture. Indeed, the poet and his poetry are synonymous with Scottish national identity.

The Robert Burns Collection of Charles Bradley at the Providence Athenæum

Donated by Jane W. Bradley, wife of Charles Bradley

Charles Bradley was a lifelong member of the Athenæum and a great enthusiast of Robert Burns. In 1920, his wife Jane presented her late husband's collection of 450 books by and about the Scottish poet to the library. This virtually comprehensive collection includes many rare and early editions of Burns' works. At the time, Mrs. Bradley wrote, "*I hope the time will never come when so valuable and unusual a library will cease to exist, and that the future generations will prize and enjoy it as we have done, and it is a pleasure and gratification to me to know that my husband's collection may find a home there.*"

*The manuscripts and books exhibited are from the Special Collections
at the Providence Athenæum, with the exception of
Walt Whitman's copy of Robert Burns' poetry.*

THE SCOTCH BARD: TIMELINE

Robert Burns published his first book of poetry, *Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect*, in Kilmarnock in 1786. While the Bradley Collection lacks this rare first edition, the Athenæum has early editions published in Edinburgh and London a year later, as well as a selection of Burnsiana. The exhibit's timeline explores the life of Burns through the publications of his work.

William Burnes. *A Manual of Religious Belief*, composed by William Burnes (the Poet's Father). Kilmarnock: M'Kie & Drennan, 1875.

Robert Burns. *Robert Burns' Common Place Book*. Edinburgh: Priv. print., 1872.

William Jacks. *Robert Burns in Other Tongues*. Glasgow: J. MacLehose & Sons, 1896.

Robert Burns. *The Complete Works of Robert Burns*. London: G. Virtue, 1842.

Robert Burns. *Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect*. Edinburgh: Printed for the author & sold by William Creech, 1787.

Robert Burns. *Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect*. London: Printed for A. Strahan, 1787.

Robert Burns. *Letters Addressed to Clarinda, &c.* Glasgow: Printed by Niven, Napier & Rhull, 1802. Extra-illustrated.

Robert Burns. *The Correspondence between Burns and Clarinda, with a Memoir of Mrs. M'Lehose (Clarinda)*. Arranged and edited by her Grandson, W.C. M'Lehose. Edinburgh: W. Tait, [1843].

Robert Burns. *Tam O'Shanter: A Tale in Verse*. Illustrated by George Cruikshank. London: Griffith, Farran, Okeden, & Welsh, 1884.

George Thompson. *A Select Collection of Original Scottish Airs for the Voice. Pleyel, Kozeluch & Haydn...by Burns*. London: T. Preston, [1803-1808].

Robert Burns. *The Works of Robert Burns; With an account of his life, and a criticism on his writings*. Liverpool: Printed by J. M'Creery..., 1800.

INFLUENCES

The work of Robert Burns is a true reflection of both the Scottish folk tradition and the universal themes reflected in the daily life of the average Scotsman. As he wrote, Burns drew upon his familiarity with the Scottish Makar tradition, as well as Classical, Biblical, and English literature.

Allan Ramsay. *The Gentle Shepherd: A Pastoral Comedy...* New York: W. Gowans, 1852.

Allan Ramsay. *The Works of Allan Ramsay; with life of the author, by George Chalmers, an essay on his genius and writings by Lord Woodhouselee...* London: A. Fullarton & Co., 1852-1858.

Alexander Pope. *The Poetical Works of Alexander Pope*. Edited by Robert Carruthers. Vol 1. London: H.G. Bohn, 1858.

Robert Burns. *Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect; To which are added, Scots poems, selected from the works of Robert Ferguson*. New York: Printed by J. and A. M'Lean, Franklin's Head, 1788.

Robert Fergusson. *The Works of Robert Fergusson; edited with life of the author...* London: A. Fullarton, 1851.

Henry Mackenzie. *The works of Henry Mackenzie*. Vol 1. Edinburgh: Printed by James Ballantyne..., 1808.

INFLUENCED

Robert Burns has maintained his status as an influential and important literary figure to this day. His understanding of and ability to empathize with the human condition has made him an enduring icon. His work has served as an influence to a myriad of writers and artists: J.D. Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye* references Burns' song "Comin' thro' the Rye;" John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* is named after a line from Burns' poem "To A Mouse;" and Bob Dylan cites Burns' song "A Red, Red Rose" as his greatest source of inspiration.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge. *The Literary Remains of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*; collected and edited by Henry Nelson Coleridge. London: W. Pickering, 1836-39.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge. *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*; various pictures are here inserted by one William W. Denslow. East Aurora, NY: Roycroft Shop, 1899.

Percy Bysshe Shelley. *Essays, Letters from Abroad; translation and fragments*, edited by Mrs. Shelley. Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1840.

William Wordsworth. *A Letter to a Friend of Robert Burns: occasioned by an intended republication of the account of the life of Burns, by Dr. Currie, and of the selection made by him from his letters, by William Wordsworth*. London: Printed for Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1816.

Robert W. Service. *Rhymes of a Red Cross Man*. New York: Barse & Hopkins, 1916.

Robert W. Service. *The Spell of the Yukon and other Verses*. New York: Barse & Hopkins, 1907.

A FACE TO THE NAME

In 1787, Burns' publisher William Creech commissioned artist Alexander Nasmyth to paint a portrait of the poet to be engraved for the first Edinburgh edition of *Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect*. Nasmyth painted the portrait from life, and it is thought to be a convincing likeness of the then 28-year-old poet. The portrait has become the most well-known image of Burns, and versions of it have been reproduced as etchings and prints in many editions of his work.

Allan Cunningham. *The Works of Robert Burns; with his life*. Vol 1. London: James Cochrane and Co., 1834.

Robert Burns. *Sapphires from Burns*. Boston: De Wolfe, Fiske & Co., 1900.

Robert Burns. *Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect*. Belfast: Printed by James Magee, 1787.

Robert Burns. *Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect*. Edinburgh: William Creech, 1787.

CELEBRATING BURNS

A Burns Night is a celebration of the life and poetry of Robert Burns, normally held on January 25th, the poet's birthday. The first Burns Supper was held on July 21, 1801 - the fifth anniversary of Burns' death. Nine of his friends met for dinner at Burns Cottage in Alloway to pay honor to his life and works. The evening was very well received, and they planned to meet again in January to celebrate his birthday in a similar fashion.

The first (and still extant) Burns Club was formed in Greenock by Ayrshire merchants in 1801. They held their first Burns Club Supper in January of 1802. Since then, people all over the world have honored the Scotch Bard with their own interpretation of Burns Suppers, and his popular legacy continues to thrive. The Athenæum's first Burns Night was celebrated more than thirty-five years ago.

"The Burns Festival-Banquet at the Astor House, New York, JAN. 25, 1859." *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*. No. 166 Vol. VII. New York: Frank Leslie, 1859.

George Anderson. *The Burns Centenary Poems; a collection of fifty of the best out of many hundreds written on occasion of the centenary celebration...* Selected and edited by George Anderson and John Finlay. Glasgow: T. Murray & Son, 1859.

William Peebles. *Burnomania: the Celebrity of Robert Burns Considered: In a Discourse addressed to all Real Christians of every Denomination.* Edinburgh: Printed by G. Caw, for J. Ogle, 1811.

Historical Sketch of the Burns Statue: the McPherson Legacy to the City of Albany. Albany, NY: Weed, Parsons & Co., 1889.

Celebration of the Hundredth Anniversary of the Birth of Robert Burns; by the Boston Burns Club. January 25th, 1859. Boston: Printed by H.W. Dutton & Son, 1859.

John Ross. *Burnsiana: A Collection of Literary Odds and Ends relating to Robert Burns*, compiled by John d. Ross. Paisley and London: A. Gardner, [1892-97].

H. Estella Partridge. *Burns Celebration, held at Delmonico's January, 1880...* New York: Stenographic and Typewriting Association, 1880.

WALT WHITMAN & ROBERT BURNS

On loan from Susan Jaffe Tane

Robert Burns. *Poems, Songs and Letters*, being the complete works of Robert Burns... edited by Alexander Smith. London: MacMillan, 1879.

A highlight of this exhibit is Walt Whitman's annotated copy of *The Works of Robert Burns*, from Andrew Carnegie's library at Skibo Castle in Scotland. This volume was one of the cornerstones of Whitman's library. In addition to his bold signature on the title page (reproduced below), he has annotated the book in many places and has preserved clippings, also annotated, on Burns and his work. On the verso of the front free endpaper, Whitman has written:

This Vol: I have had with me for 8 or 9 years - (after trying many edn's this suits me best upon the whole.) I often take it up - open almost at random - seems to me more than a novel. - wrote this April 20 '89.

This is the edition Whitman had at hand when he revised his 1875 article "A Modern Poet on the Scotch Bard" for the *New York Critic* in 1882 and the *North American Review* in 1886. Laid in are tear-sheets of Whitman's article for the *North American Review*, with the author's corrections and manuscript additions. While Whitman revised this essay at least five times over the last 17 years of his life, it is interesting to note that his focus was increasingly in Burns the person, as he reflected on his own legacy as an American poet.

Whitman gave the book to New York diamond merchant and Whitman supporter, John H. Johnston in 1892, and Johnston presented the book to Andrew Carnegie in 1902. Both Walt Whitman and Andrew Carnegie held the poetry of Robert Burns in high esteem. This important and revealing volume from Whitman's library has not been seen since it entered Andrew Carnegie's collection 115 years ago. It is exhibited for the first time in *The Scotch Bard: Robert Burns as Poet and Person*. The exhibit's title is a tribute to the essay by Whitman, initially published as "A Modern Poet on the Scotch Bard" (1875), and later revised under the title, "Robert Burns as Poet and Person" (1886).

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Walt Whitman



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Reference Librarian & Special Collections Assistant

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Director of Collections & Library Services

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