



Christmas at the Hampshire Bookshop



Mouse Expense

IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN OUR AMBITION to have a comfortable furry cat lying about on the chairs and counters or in the windows. Several attempts have been made in this direction. The first kitten that was entrusted to us came from the vicinity of Amherst and by the law of opposites, this coal black piece of fur was entitled Emily Dickinson. Emily claimed the devotion of the whole staff and required a good deal of care during an attack of illness, from which she mewingly recovered, still keeping her nine lives to draw on. Customers began to complain that they were not receiving the usual attention as we all gravitated to the basement to circle about Emily. One day, Emily and her white whiskers disappeared and neither the whiskers nor Emily were ever heard of again. Sorrow and embittered surprise brushed the affections of the staff, when they realized the ungrateful spirit which had been in Emily all the time. What to charge the veterinary, milk and canned salmon to, we wondered, but briefly and callously wrote off Cat Sundries \$3.57. When the auditor came, it was explained rather sheepishly that this was an amusing item. Bored as usual he said figuratively: "It is usually put under Mouse Expense by big firms"; so Mouse Expense it is.

The second attempt was a pair of little tigers, who injected into the usual routine of Bookshop life, an element of excitement that was unlooked for. No corner or height or drawer escaped their inquiring paws and one morning our customers were forced to pick their way over a floor completely spider webbed by balls of cord thoroughly wound

From "Bookshop News," Hampshire Bookshop Book Scorpion Miscellany, December 1929.

around the legs of all chairs and tables. Their demise came soon and there were few who regretted the peace that descended after the tragic affair of the coal truck.

The comforts of having a cat had not been mentioned for years, although birds and dogs had been suggested. There appeared on our doorstep last Fall, a very dirty gray and white cat, who looked experienced in Alley Life and who, after that leisurely and appraising inspection which only a cat can give, stalked in and went directly to the basement. There, the high Mogul of our Shipping and Receiving Department, offered hospitality in the shape of warmth and food and many promises of rats and mice if she would stay. She was christened Folio and lies curled up under a Tavern table, a roof of good literature over her head, and we have reason to believe that she romps with the mice at night. At present Folio may be likened to a Fall Dandelion as the Spring moult takes place in all the wrong places. But, at last, we have a cat curled in comfort on our premises. Sought out, we were, and adopted. What greater honor? O welcome Mouse Expense!

OOOO



An Anniversary

THE HAMPSHIRE BOOKSHOP of Northampton, Massachusetts, was founded in April, 1916, by Marion Dodd and Mary Byers Smith, graduates of Smith College. It was one of the first “personal bookshops” established in the United States, and also one of the first run by women.

Building on strong experience and roots in the book trade, a year of careful planning, and adequate capitalization, Dodd and Smith created a business that would succeed for more than fifty-five years—a story I’ve researched for the last twenty. The Hampshire Bookshop served Smith College students but, more important, functioned as the heart of literary life for the entire region. As Robert Frost wrote to Dodd on the occasion of the Bookshop’s twentieth anniversary, “You are one of the few bookshops in the world where books are sold in something like the spirit they were written in.”

In that spirit, this season the Mortimer Rare Book Room of Smith College celebrates the Hampshire Bookshop’s coming centennial with curator Barbara Blumenthal’s exhibition of materials from its collections — including issues of “The Book Scorpion,” the Bookshop’s newsletter featuring drawings and cartoons by Hester Hoffman.

Though the Bookshop is long gone, its contributions live in fond memory. The Scorp, wherever he may be, wishes all a Merry Christmas, a Happy New Year, and an honored Golden Anniversary.



Barbara Brannon • 1923 29th Street • Lubbock, Texas 79411 USA

www.BarbaraBrannon.com

Share your memories at facebook.com/HampshireBookshop