

The Indianapolis Literary Club
 2018-2019: 143th Year
"Nautical Brothers"

Stephen J. Jay. Tuesday, 8:00 P.M., January 22, 2019

Regular Meeting of the Indianapolis Literary Club, Park Tudor School.



"Here, where his eye fell, had once been green fields and running brooks, and how had the kind earth been despoiled and disfigured."

Newton Booth Tarkington, *The Turmoil*, 1915.

"All of us know history repeats itself, but mighty few of us recognize the repetition until too late."

Kenneth Lewis Roberts, *Oliver Wiswell*, 1940.

"You can't destroy ideas by force, and you can't hide 'em by silence."

Kenneth Lewis Roberts, *Oliver Wiswell*, 1940

"Tomorrow is not our master; it is in our hands and will be what we make of it."

Booth Tarkington, *Facing the Year*, Radio WFBM 30 Dec 1945.



Key Words:

Subjects: American & Indiana Authors; Newton Booth Tarkington; Kenneth Roberts; Creative Writing; Literary Reputation; American Revolution & War 1812; Early-mid 20th c Literature; Historical Novels; Social & Cultural Trends in America, early 20th c.; Population Health; Pollution; Sailing Ships; Culturomics; Pulitzer Prize.

yes_____ I agree to allow the webmaster of the Literary Club to upload my essay to the Club's Internet website. I also agree that, after the Literary Club transfers a copy of my essay to the Indiana Historical Society, the Society may upload it to the Society's Internet website.

Stephen J. Jay M.D. Jan 22, 2019

Indianapolis Literary Club

Tues. Jan 22, 2019

Stephen J. Jay, essayist

Nautical Brothers

Hypergraphia is an unquenchable urge to write: *The Midnight Disease*; Keats, Poe, and Melville had it. Stevenson wrote *Jekyll and Hyde* (1886) on a six-day cocaine binge; van Gogh and Robert Schumann created with fury, suffering manic-depression. ^(49,94)

Tonight's essay concerns two compulsive writers, neither of whom had an obvious cause for hypergraphia. Other than their writing compulsions, they had strikingly different backgrounds, yet developed a long and productive literary relationship. ^(12, 113, 249)

My aims this evening are:

1. To reflect on how two leading authors of early 20th c formed an unlikely literary bond.
2. To review how their writings captivated readers in times of fascism, wars, depression, and dramatic societal changes.
3. To reflect on their fleeting literary reputations.

Recently, I reread Kenneth Roberts' War of 1812 novels, *The Lively Lady* and *Captain Caution*, (1934) in which he acknowledged Booth Tarkington as expert in "... seamanship, gunnery, ship-design and the Gangway Pendulum". ^(150, 154, 155) What did Hoosier Tarkington know of sailing war ships? Curiosity prompted this essay. ^(43, 66, 114, 115, 119, 137)

Birth and Ancestors:

Kenneth Roberts, (1885-1957) born in Kennebunk, Maine, in 1885, was an only child in a family of modest means; his nor'-east ancestors included privateers in the early wars. ^(10, 98, 148, 151, 159, 160, 253) Booth Tarkington (1869-1946) was born into an Indianapolis family of wealth, in 1869. ^(82, 113, 249, 249a) Father Judge Tarkington kept servants and horses; Mother, Elizabeth, was a New England socialite. ^(12, 129) Uncle Newton Booth, a saloon keeper, became governor of California and U.S. Senator - an Anti-Monopolist. ⁽¹¹³⁾ Tarkington's ancestors, from the East and South, included, Episcopalians, Baptists, a Pioneer Methodist preacher, and grandfather, Beebe, a Yankee shopkeeper who, after serving in the War of 1812, loaded a pack horse bound for Indiana on Daniel Boone's Wilderness Trail, His family seeking education for women and a home without "the blight of slavery..." ^(228, 248, 249)

Education:

Roberts' and Tarkington's educational experiences differed- Roberts' was traditional, Tarkington's, anything but. Tarkington failed Indianapolis High School (Shortridge HS) from chronic truancy. ^(12, 248) Strange facial tics were diagnosed, Sydenham's Chorea; he suffered poor self-esteem. While he loved to read, write and draw, he failed to graduate from Phillips Exeter Academy, Purdue University and Princeton. ^(40, 133, 134, 142, 226) Roberts and Tarkington did lead similar campus lives. The *Cornell Class Book* said: if Roberts "were to wear all his club and society pins, there would be a decided list to port; everything would spill from his pockets." He edited Cornell's humor magazine and penned fight songs-- portending a writing career as a "crusader", with "belligerent style." ^(11, 161) At Princeton, Tarkington founded the *Triangle Club*, edited the *Nassau Literary Magazine* and contributed humorous drawings to the *Princeton Tiger*. ^(102, 169, 144) A classmate said Tarkington "was the only man to be able to play poker with his left hand, write a story for the *Nassau Lit* with his right hand, and lead the singing in a crowded room, performing these three acts simultaneously." ⁽¹⁰²⁾ Later, Tarkington was delighted to become the only non -graduate of Princeton to receive two honorary degrees. ⁽²²⁷⁾

Personalities

Roberts' and Tarkington's personalities differed. ^(11, 12, 152, 248, 249) To introduce Roberts was to say: "Pardon me, ... a tornado is about to pass through ..." ⁽¹⁰⁾ He was profane, dogmatic, unpredictable, yet witty. ^(25, 113) Playing Charades, Roberts drew: "Caesar's Gallic Wars." Irrate when his team didn't catch his pantomimed clues, he swore and pounded a Chippendale table holding an exquisite 17th c lamp. The genteel Tarkington chided, "Don't break the lamp, Ken. Lord Nelson and Lady Hamilton dined by its light." ⁽¹¹³⁾

Tarkington was neither profane nor dogmatic but gracious and empathetic--a story-teller and jokester extraordinaire. ^(12, 78) Great-niece, Susanah Mayberry, remembered his distinguished look, twinkling brown eyes behind heavy glasses, and "his ever-present Turkish cigarettes...". ⁽¹¹³⁾ Tarkington picked up an 18-year-old hitchhiker in rural Ohio, drove him to New York City and wrote a letter of recommendation to a sea Captain who hired the young man, launching his career in the U.S. Navy. In 2009, this hitchhiker's son told how his father's life was changed, forever, by a gracious, famous author. Such was the persona of Booth Tarkington. ⁽⁷⁴⁾

Marriage

Roberts was married once, Tarkington, twice. Roberts's creative wife, Anna Seiberling Mosser, is credited with her husband's successes. ^(25, 152) Tarkington married Laurel Louisa Fletcher, in 1902; they honeymooned at Lake Maxinkuckee where Tarkington finished his first novel, *The Gentleman from Indiana*. ^(53, 113, 221) Louisa, a poet, graduated from Smith and met Tarkington when they were cast in a play at Indianapolis Dramatic Club. ^(50- 53, 187, 248) She arranged many of Tarkington's plays on Broadway, and his book, *The Magnificent Ambersons*, was likely based on her colorful, yet tragic family. ⁽⁵⁴⁾ Just as poet Ellen Louisa Tucker, first wife of Ralph Waldo Emerson, played a silent but important role in Emerson's literary career, Tarkington's first wife, Laurel Louisa, played a similar role in his. ^(6, 54, 68, 93) Despite their literary passions, they divorced, in 1911- Tarkington's alcoholism a problem. ⁽²⁴⁸⁾ Their child, Laurel Louisa, was five and stayed

with her mother who remarried and had another daughter. Shortly after this birth, Laurel, then 16, became despondent and was sent home to Indianapolis, where she was diagnosed with schizophrenia. With a nurse and an aunt in her room, Laurel jumped from a second-floor window, survived, but died of pneumonia. ⁽¹¹³⁾ Throughout this trying time, Tarkington's former wife wrote for national magazines, her best-known poem, *The Land of Beginning Again*, a metaphor, written during her divorce that inspired Bing Crosby's song, *The Bells of St. Mary*, and the movie, starring Ingrid Bergman and Crosby. ^(14, 52, 53)

"I wish that there were some wonderful place
 Called the Land of Beginning Again
 Where all our mistakes and all our heartaches
 And all of our selfish grief
 Could be dropped like a shabby old coat by the door
 And never be put on again."

A year after his divorce, Tarkington married Susannah Robinson- her stipulation--he quit drinking. He did in 1912; their marriage lasted 33 happy years. Susannah was the *grande dame* of Tarkington's home, his life's love, confidant, companion, care-giver, business manager, investor, hostess, conversationalist; and, she inspired her husband's classic character, *Penrod*. ^(46, 78a, 113, 248)

Military

Many of Roberts' and Tarkington's ancestors served in the military. Roberts served. Tarkington did not. In 1917, Robert's was Captain in Military Intelligence, in the Army Expeditionary Force, in Siberia. ^(44, 45, 47, 61, 152). On return, he received a letter, in June 1919, from Tarkington, whom he had never met. Tarkington had been contacted by Roberts' commanding officer in Siberia, Major Rupert Hughes, who knew Tarkington through literary circles. ⁽⁹⁶⁾ Hughes, an author, film producer and uncle to Howard Hughes, Sr., suggested that Tarkington keep an eye on the talented Roberts, whom he said had an "excitable nature." ^(43, 61, 149, 152, 200) Thus began their 30-year- long friendship. As neighbors in Kennebunkport, they spent endless hours creating heroic characters and plots and editing Roberts' swashbuckling novels. ⁽¹¹⁾

Early writing

The early writing careers of Roberts and Tarkington differed. ⁽⁸⁸⁾ Roberts spent hours in his grandmother's kitchen listening to tales of her brothers who fought pirates and hostile navies. He learned of Rebecca, Sarah, and Mary Towne, ancestors tried as witches, in 1692; Rebecca and Mary were hanged, Sarah banished. ^(10, 11, 41, 98, 99 101, 121) Roberts wrote in high school and college and as reporter for *Boston Post* (1909-1917) and *Saturday Evening Post*, publishing eight books based on *Post* articles. ⁽³³⁾ In his late 30s, Roberts decided, at Tarkington's urging, to write about his grandmother's fascinating ancestors; Roberts became an historical novelist. ^(236, 237, 247)

Tarkington began writing at 7- a play about Jesse James presented in his father's stable. ^(12, 248, 249) He illustrated a poem that convinced mother that her son was a poet and artist. ⁽¹⁶⁾ At 14, he read Howells', *The Rise of Silas Lapham*, an experience that shaped his career as a novelist of realism. ⁽¹¹³⁾ Tarkington and his sister, Mary "Haute," became literary leaders in Indianapolis', the *Matinee Club-25* and *The Dramatic Club*. ^(12, 80, 188, 189) Tarkington joined our *Indianapolis Literary Club*, In 1901. ⁽⁹⁰⁾ In his mid- 20's, depressed by years of rejection slips, Tarkington received a letter (1899) from Hamlin Garland, the Pulitzer Prize winner: "Mr. McClure gave me your manuscript, *The Gentleman from Indiana*, to read. You are a novelist." ^(12, 181, 245,248) This "golden ray of sun" transformed Tarkington's spirits. ^(11, 32, 247) A year later Tarkington penned the popular romance, *Monsieur Beaucaire*. (1900) Adapted for stage, opera and film, movies featured Valentino and Hope with Joan Caulfield. Tarkington joined prominent authors of the day, Twain, Edith Wharton, Willa Cather, Sinclair Lewis. His career launched, Tarkington took a respite from writing, in 1902, becoming an Indiana legislator with civic duty in mind but also to enter political society, a rich source for his novels. ⁽¹⁹⁰⁻¹⁹³⁾ Rich it was. In 1905, his political novel, *In The Arena*, (1905) prompted President Roosevelt to praise Tarkington at the White House for urging citizens to "take part in politics." ^(46, 124, 248) After a near fatal bout of typhoid fever at the end of his term, Tarkington's physician recommended he recuperate abroad. For a decade, Tarkington was a peripatetic, trans -Atlantic commuter, seeking writers' refuge and living with artists in Paris, on the Rue de Tournon. ⁽²⁴⁸⁾

Peak Professional work as novelists:

The peaks of Tarkington's and Robert's careers were the 1920s and 1940s, respectively. Theirs were lives of constant change, ^(76, 117,152, 220, 248) their writings popular and lucrative- their collaboration, rewarding. ^(10, 105, 108, 233) Robert's was initially "belittled ...as a novelist," ⁽¹¹⁾ but, in April 1934, he experienced "literary rebirth" on receiving a Doctorate in Letters from Dartmouth. ⁽⁹⁾ By 1945, he had published 500 articles and eight popular historical novels. (*Arundel* (1929); *The Lively Lady* (1931); *Rabble in Arms* (1933); *Captain Caution* (1934); *Northwest Passage* (1937); *Oliver Wiswell* (1940); *Lydia Bailey* (1947) and *Boon Island* (1956). ^(10, 237) His novel, *Northwest Passage*, (1937) became a best-seller, and earnings from it built his estate, in Kennebunkport. ^(11, 25, 166) Robert's was recognized for his detailed research and historical accuracy in writing. He found Privateers' ships were superior to British ships because they carried fore and aft rigging, the pivot gun, and the Gangway Pendulum, which indicated when the ship was level, key for accuracy in firing cannons. ⁽¹⁵²⁾ Always irascible, Roberts accused historians for "deliberate falsification" of history. ⁽⁹⁾

Tarkington focused on cheerful, often humorous, satirical, and romanticized, aspects of life, writing about what he knew best, life among the wealthy. ^(80, 248, 110, 113) He joined gifted authors who wrote for children: Tarkington's, *Penrod*, ^(46, 139, 211, 213, 252) Twain's, *Tom Sawyer*, Thurber's, *Many Moons*, and E. B. White's, *Charlotte's Web*. Tarkington's elegant mansion, *Seawood*, in Kennebunkport, was amusingly called "the house that *Penrod* built". ^(196- 198, 223) The literary movements of this time included *realism* –a faithful representation of life (think Tarkington and Twain) and *naturalism*, a Darwinian view of survival of the fittest (think Upton Sinclair and Dreiser). ^(1, 18, 30, 39, 46, 248) Hoosier Theodore Dreiser (1871-1945) grew up amid poverty once

saying: “Art is the stored honey of the human soul, gathered on wings of misery and travail”.^(37,143) His novel, *Sister Carrie*, in 1900, was a tale of a “fallen woman”; for decades his writings were considered radical and censored; he was criticized for being anti-Semitic and a Communist.^(12, 42, 122, 143) The public bought millions of Tarkington’s novels, that decried anti- religious values of materialism, reduction of life to an equation, and the nihilism of Hemingway; Tarkington challenged these authors: “What do you have to offer in response to the *Whence*, the *Why*, and the *Whither* of Existence?” But, while Tarkington was commercially successful, Dreiser’s raw pioneering *naturalism* was favored by many literary critics.^(12, 46)

Tarkington was a leader of The Golden Age of Indiana Literature (1880-1920) when its authors ranked second to New York for best sellers: Edward Eggleston, Maurice Thompson, George Ade, Lew Wallace, Meredith Nicholson, George Barr McCutcheon, Gene Stratton- Porter, James Whitcomb Riley, and Frank McKinney (Kin Hubbard.)^(82, 87, 117, 234, 244, 248) Tarkington appeared nine times on best-seller lists, and in the 1921 *Publisher’s Weekly* Poll, he was the most “significant” contemporary author, Wharton second, Dreiser 14th. *New York Times* found Tarkington to be one of the ten greatest contemporary Americans.^(13,78, 110, 195, 223, 224, 243) He published forty volumes of fiction,⁽¹¹³⁾ 19 plays, two hundred short stories.⁽²³²⁾ With dramatist, Harry Leon Wilson, he wrote, *The Man from Home* (1908), a highly successful Broadway play.^(22, 113, 207, 232) Thirty-eight movies were adapted from Tarkington’s writings,⁽²⁴³⁾ including Orson Welles’ *Magnificent Ambersons*.⁽⁹⁵⁾ Only Tarkington, Updike, and Faulkner won two Pulitzer Prizes for fiction-- Tarkington’s prizes: *Magnificent Ambersons* (1919), and *Alice Adams* (1921).^(104, 180) Tarkington also won the O. Henry Memorial Award in 1931 for his story “*Cider of Normandy*.”⁽²²²⁾ Tarkington wrote *The Turmoil* (1915), the first novel in his *Growth Trilogy*, followed by *The Magnificent Ambersons*, (1918) and *The Midlander*. (1923) This trilogy was a perceptive reflection of declining fortunes of *Gilded Age* families, the rise of industrial tycoons, and the toxic effects of industrialization.^(46, 110, 199)

In his 40s, Tarkington began to lose eyesight.^(113,248) He accepted disability with humility, saying jokingly that he “matriculated at Wilmer Institute in ’29 and hoped to graduate in ’31.” By 1930, he was blind; surgeries returned partial vision; throughout these hardships, his literary output continued; instead of writing with pencils, he dictated to assistant, Betty Trotter.

Politics:

Roberts and Tarkington engaged in political debate a hundred years ago and compared to today’s rhetoric, the expression: “Plus ca change, plus c’est la meme chose,” seems to fit.^(81, 217, 237)

Roberts wrote for *Saturday Evening Post’s* Editor, Lorimer, and testified before Congress, supporting the 1924 U.S. Immigration Act, urging severe restrictions on immigration from eastern and southern Europe and Mexico.^(10, 11, 24, 65, 128, 152, 237) Roberts supported Mussolini, favored eugenicists, and the Ku Klux Klan⁽¹⁰³⁾ saying: “If America doesn’t keep out the queer alien ... people, her ... citizens will ... be dwarfed and mongrelized....” In his book, *Why Europe Leaves Home*, Roberts said the superior Nordic race should not be “cross-bred...”^{(8, 34, 64, 65, 89, 127,}

128, 145, 146, 147, 172, 173) Ironically, he spoke of the “virtues of Native Americans”- self-sufficiency, American blood, and Protestant work ethic. ^(11, 152) By 1927, Roberts had moderated his xenophobia: admitting that Mussolini and Fascists were “tyrannical and dangerous.” ^(3, 10, 152)

Booth Tarkington’s ancestors included Democrats, Socialists and Republicans; his father switched parties to follow Lincoln and was a close friend of Benjamin Harrison. Booth Tarkington was conservative, an independent thinker, defending thoughtful contrary views. He recounted a four-hour engaging conversation on a train with a stranger. They recognized each other and thirty years later, Tarkington reflected that while politically he was an “old Republican...”, “...among the highest respects in my life” was memory of the democratic socialist, Eugene Debs. ^(248, 249)

When Tarkington was elected as a Republican to the Indiana Legislature, he showed independence. On a reformatory bill, Republican Governor Durbin had to compromise with him; the *News* lauded Tarkington’s bipartisanship. ^(247, 248, 248a, 249) He supported bills to bar rate -fixing by insurance companies and to educate the blind and deaf to prevent poverty; despite Helen Keller’s support, Durbin vetoed the bills. Tarkington supported Sunday baseball to encourage the working class to spend time at games rather than pubs, away from their families. This too was defeated but one of Tarkington’s popular political stories, “*Mrs. Protheroe*,” was based on this episode.

As WWI loomed, Tarkington, with close ties to Europe, expressed concerns about fascism before Americans had interest in the cause against the Central Powers. ⁽²⁴⁸⁾ He attacked isolationists whom he said were “myopic” that the U.S. could avoid world conflict. While he disliked FDR, Tarkington believed that he showed appropriate concern about fascism and became “... a great war- time leader.” As WWII loomed, Tarkington urged Americans to support it, penning patriotic articles and radio programs. In 1943, he wrote an article to accompany Norman Rockwell’s illustration of *Freedom of Speech*. This story’s ending, reminiscent of O. Henry, featured a housepainter and journalist, who met at a chalet in the Alps-- young Hitler and Mussolini. ⁽²¹⁰⁾

Personal interests:

What attracted Roberts and Tarkington to their long friendship? Passion and compulsion for writing clever stories? Harmonizing personalities and sense of humor? Political conservatism? Success in literary commerce? Their adjacent homes and compatible families in Kennebunk? Fascination for swashbucklers and the Golden Era of sailing? Their interests in collecting? ^(21, 27, 55, 98, 99, 101, 109, 116, 162-164, 203, 239-241) Both men were avid collectors of art, antiques and *objet’s d’art*. ^(11, 108, 153, 179, 205, 214, 215, 216) Roberts collected intricately detailed bone model sailing ships of 1812, one made by inmates of Dartmoor, where his great- grandfather served time. Roberts studied how a square rigger’s yards were raised and lowered, how guns were run from the ports, and how the davits swung out and lifeboat falls released. At his writing studio on Orbetello Bay, Tuscany, Roberts learned how brigs and barques maneuvered in close quarters and he created, exciting, three-dimensional action in his vivid sea stories. ⁽¹⁵²⁾

Tarkington also collected model ships and paintings and real yachts. ^(107, 113, 208, 209, 212) The 80-foot schooner, *Regina*, became his study, “The Floats”, where he and friends shared nautical tales and songs. ^(69, 97, 174, 201, 202, 214, 247, 248) Authors have noted the irony of a Hoosier landlubber, “with one foot in the heartland, the other near the sea.” ⁽⁷⁴⁾ Recognized by art experts, Tarkington specialized in 17th and 18th c British portraits. He and a famous art historian, Erwin Panofsky, a German Jew, exchanged letters for years, reflecting their liberality of ideas--the Atom bomb, anti-Semitism, and the nexus of art and literature. ^(113, 248) In 2016, the Indianapolis Museum of Art, featured Tarkington’s portrait collection. ^(2, 70, 84-86, 175, 177, 184, 221)

Controversies:

As noted, authors, Roberts and Tarkington received kudos and criticisms. Roberts was denounced for political rhetoric about immigration. ^(10, 11, 24, 72, 238) He vehemently defended Benedict Arnold, whom he considered a patriot, not a traitor, raising hackles, as did his pro-Royalist sentiments expressed in his novel *Oliver Wiswell*. ^(58, 152, 253) Roberts condemned wars as a “necessary evil” “... a senseless madness that leaves no one unscarred, except the politicians ...” ⁽¹¹⁾ In 1924, Roberts “dazzled” readers with success stories of a Florida land boom. When the bubble burst, he was criticized and wrote of the “crooked” side of the deals. ^(10,152) He and the *Post* editor attributed the recovery from this debacle to their *Post* articles that advised of investment dangers. A cynic would say, “they made money coming and going.” ⁽¹⁵²⁾ Roberts turned to dowsing in his later years. ^(123, 131) *The American Philosophical Society* said the controversy was a sad ending for Robert’s remarkable career. ⁽¹⁵⁶⁻¹⁵⁸⁾ Always pugnacious, Roberts compared dowsing critics to the “malignantly ferocious” Puritans who hanged his ancestors as witches. ⁽¹¹⁾

Tarkington was criticized for wartime propaganda, and as WWI was ending, he sought to prevent wars and had sharp disagreement with Senator Beveridge, over the American *League to Enforce Peace*. (1915) ^(167, 248) Beveridge argued the *League* was un-American; Tarkington replied, “Neither were the Pilgrim Fathers.” As WWII was ending, some criticized Tarkington who supported an “impartial watchman,” the *United Nations*, to internationalize control of the atomic bomb. Finally, Tarkington has been criticized for offensive stereotyping black characters. Other critics say he was not a bigot, citing *Penrod*, when Verman is insulted by Georgie with a racial slur, Sam emphatically comes to his defense.” And, in *Alice Adams* he appropriately “skewers” Alice for her high-handedness toward African-Americans who came into her orbit. ^(12, 23, 38, 110, 125, 135, 141, 250, 251, 252)

Public Health:

Roberts and especially Tarkington wrote of the human condition, including health and disease. Roberts raised awareness to health consequences of prisoners’ abuse. ^(11, 19, 48, 111, 120, 130, 236) He advocated for preventing disease among Native Americans, blaming the “magnificently stupid government” for not providing health care. Roberts urged voters to pressure Congress to support the Indian Bureau. ^(11,237)

Tarkington's writings stressed society's role in preventing disease. ^(12, 248) He referred to malaria in *The Gentleman from Indiana* and in *Alice Adams*, where he alludes to preventing malaria by screening windows, even before Dr. Ross won his Nobel Prize for discovering the mosquito's role. ^(20, 178, 182) Tarkington's works are replete with references to adverse impacts of pollution. Tarkington said: "Indoors as well as out we often breathed a grimy air, and our throats and lungs were the worse for it." ⁽¹²⁾ He wrote of Indiana War Memorial's "smoke stains...soiled with the grime of prosperity," and in the novel, *The Turmoil*, he describes a city (probably Indianapolis) as a "dirty and wonderful city nesting dingily in the fog of its own smoke." ^(12, 60)

Tarkington also addressed many other health issues including: **Burns from fires**, ⁽¹²⁾ **Road Accidents**, ⁽¹²⁾ **Blindness**, ⁽²⁴⁸⁾ **Critical role of medical science, technology and education**, ⁽¹²⁾ **Poverty and Disease**, ⁽¹²⁾ **Alcoholism**, ^(4, 170, 248) **Mental Health**, ^(12, 79, 246) **Harms of Accelerating Pace of Society**, ^(31, 59, 113) **Benefits of positive humane thinking**, ⁽¹²⁾ and **Children's health**: In 1916, he joined Ade, Nicholson, Fesler, Fortune, and J.K. Lilly to create Riley Memorial Association to build James Whitcomb Riley Hospital. ^(83,106, 206, 219) Tarkington even addressed health of animals; at age 73, he led the cause of homeless dogs that the Indianapolis pound sold for \$4.00. In a letter to city council he wrote: "It can be heaven on earth to be a \$4 dog." ⁽⁷⁾ Finally, Tarkington addressed, **War and Public Health**. An elder statesman in postwar policy, Tarkington urged politicians to build institutions to prevent conflict and urged ratification of the UN Charter, to promote peace and contain nuclear proliferation that he thought was a dire threat to mankind. ^(136, 248)

Roberts' and Tarkington's literary reputations:

What about our author's ephemeral literary reputations? ^(12, 13, 75, 110, 113) Seneca, the Roman Stoic philosopher, said: "the whole concord of this world consists in discords," aptly describing literary criticism. ⁽⁶⁷⁾ Traditional criteria of authors' literary reputation include: major biographies, Library of Congress entries, a dedicated journal, writings in university curricula, and the lasting influence of authors. Among Hoosiers, Dreiser wins these comparisons, though Tarkington sold more books. ⁽¹²⁾ The correlation between the number of books published and lasting literary excellence is messy. Hypergraphia is not a sure indicator of success. ^(36, 56, 57, 118, 138, 176, 229)

A new technology, Culturomics, supports analysis of the frequency that an author's name appears in millions of Google books, from 1800 to 2000- a proxy for public interest in the author. ^(1a, 91, 92) For Hoosier authors, 'nautical brother' Kenneth Roberts, and literary legends for comparison, the frequency (High to Low) that an author's name appeared in the year 2000 was as follows: (No. author's name / Total No. of words, as %)

- a. Shakespeare: 0.0019% - 2 thousandths %
- b. Homer: 0.0006% - 6 ten thousandths %
- c. Dickens: 0.0005%
- d. Hemingway & Faulkner - 0.00036%

- e. Dostoevsky: 0.00015%
- f. H. James: 0.00013%
- g. Updike: 0.000077% - **8 hundred thousandths %**
- h. **Dreiser:** 0.00006% - 6 hundred thousandths of a %
- i. S. King 0.00003%
- j. A. Christie 0.00002%
- k. AC Doyle 0.000019%
- l. **L Wallace:** 0.000006% - 6 millionths%
- m. H. Lee 0.000005%
- n. **JW Riley:** 0.000004, % - 4 millionths%
- o. **Tarkington:** 0.000003% - 3 millionths %
- p. JD Salinger 0.000002%
- q. **K Roberts:** 0.000002% - 2 millionths%

These differences are orders of magnitude: for Shakespeare, thousandths %, to millionths % for Wallace, Riley, Tarkington and Roberts. Dreiser rate is similar to Updike's.

A second question: Among Hoosiers, what was their career peak rank in the 1900s?

- a. **Tarkington: 1921. 0.000075%, 8 hundred thousandths%**
- b. Dreiser: 1930-65. 0.000037%
- c. Riley: 1919. 0.000026%
- d. Ade: 1943. 0.000023%
- e. Wallace: 1903. 0.000021%
- f. Nicholson: 1918. 0.0000085%, **8 millionths%**
- g. Porter: 1920. 0.0000040%
- h. Hubbard: 1955. 0.0000022%
- i. **K Roberts:** 0.000002% - 2 millionths%

These statistics complement traditional criteria. Roberts and more so Tarkington were popular at their peaks, much less so 50 years after their deaths. ^(15, 168, 169)

Why? There is no one answer; multiple factors determine value: literary genre; marketing; fashion; authors' gender and race, the literary canon, the relationship between writer and reader. What is valued is what is transmitted across generations. ^(12, 56, 57, 67, 77a, 118) Neither Roberts' nor Tarkington's writings were included in academic curricula. ⁽¹¹⁾ Tarkington reflected on his popularity with the public but mediocre reception by critics; he recounted a dinner with Arthur Rubenstein (1887-1982), who said the "the audience creates its own concert—all he can do is to give it the opportunity." Tarkington wrote novels and let readers create their own "concert". Millions liked his offerings, satire, humor, romance. ⁽⁴⁶⁾ Critics chide Tarkington's writings for lack of consistent quality, lapses into melodrama and sentimentality, a reliance on simple solutions, avoidance of the consequential or provocative, and pandering to the popular

tastes. Other pundits have respected Tarkington's optimism, quick-wit and gracious humor, practical idealism, humanism, and his evidence-based concerns about the dehumanizing industrialization of society.

Tarkington has found favor with some modern critics. ⁽¹²⁾ David Frum, literary critic and former speech writer for George H.W. Bush said, "Booth Tarkington has not been forgotten because his (best) work lacks merit." ^(250, 251) Frum offered several reasons for Tarkington's literary demise: He wrote before literary modernism evolved in the '30s and '40s and failed to adapt. ⁽⁴⁶⁾ His characters, based in Realism, were overshadowed by writers of Naturalism- Tarkington's successful businessmen or women in traditional roles, compared with the gritty immigrants, minorities, the poor and outcasts of society of Upton Sinclair and Dreiser. Also, Tarkington's racial stereotypes were unacceptable in most university curricula. He eschewed graphic violence or sex saying: "Sex sells" but "A thing is not art if a pinch of dirt is deliberately added to it to make it sell." ^(12, 46). Finally, Frum noted that Tarkington's focus on the Midwest was out of sync in the 1920s-1950s as the east and west coasts emerged as the new industrial and cultural centers of America. ⁽¹⁷¹⁾ But, a recent defender of Tarkington's literary relevance suggests 21st c readers who have "rediscovered values of place, rootedness and community" might find Tarkington a "kindred spirit." ^(12, 13, 28, 110, 113, 248, 251)

Legacies

In conclusion both Booth Tarkington and Kenneth Roberts were captivating story-tellers, of the American Revolution and early 20th c. American social and cultural history. ^(58, 73) Roberts received a Special Pulitzer Prize, in 1957, for his historical novels that created much public interest in early American history. ^(9, 11, 140) He died, less than three months later, July 21, 1957, in Kennebunk, and was buried in Arlington National Cemetery. Today, he is a famous patriot of the *Pine Tree State* of Maine. Perhaps Hebert Faulkner West, Professor of Comparative Literature at Dartmouth, captured the essence of Robert's legacy: "...no one has painted so vigorously and with so much respect for fact some of the vast canvases of characters and scenes in American history." ^(26, 236)

Tarkington created novel stories of cultural development and social mobility of the Midwest, from post- civil war society to an industrialized heartland, similar to the histories of Faulkner's novels of Mississippi and Cather's novels of Nebraska. Tarkington wrote during times of extraordinary changes: prohibition, the woman's vote, Great Depression, two world wars-- horse and buggy to the jet airplane, asafetida bags to penicillin; he personally saw a stricken veteran of the Civil War, the dropping of the atom bomb. ⁽¹¹³⁾ Many critics have failed to recognize the depth and breadth of Tarkington's perceptive observations regarding the threats of despoiling of the environment and jeopardizing the public's health. ⁽¹¹⁰⁾

Thomas Friedman, author of, *Thank You for Being Late* (2016) pressed today's challenges into our consciences: acceleration of technology, globalization and the existential threats of pollution and climate change, all echoes of Tarkington's writing 125 years ago. ^(59, 74, 113) The difference today, the rate of change has increased dramatically amid societal discord and incivility.

The essence of the person, Booth Tarkington, was captured by Dorothy Russo and Thelma L. Sullivan in their Indiana Historical Society bibliography: they called Tarkington “an invincibly kind man, a humanitarian, and an author with a perpetual wish to ... communicate truths about the nature of man.”⁽⁷⁸⁾ Tarkington died May 19, 1946, in Indianapolis.⁽⁷⁾ An eternal optimist, near the end of his life, in a radio broadcast, Tarkington said, “Tomorrow is not our master; it is in our hands and will be what we make of it.” How true then and now.^(46, 113)

Tarkington and Roberts were aficionados of the sea and contemporaries of John Masefield the poet laureate of the United Kingdom; Masefield and Tarkington were leaders in creation of the “League of Nations for Men and Women of Letters” (PEN).⁽¹³²⁾ In his seaside nautical retreat, Tarkington, Roberts and friends no doubt read, recited and perhaps sang, Masefield’s (1878-1967) ‘*Sea Fever*,’⁽¹¹²⁾ a fitting metaphor for the personal lives and literary careers of our Nautical Brothers.

*“I must go down to the seas again, to the lonely sea and the sky,
And all I ask is a tall ship and a star to steer her by;
And the wheel’s kick and the wind’s song and the white sail’s shaking,
And a grey mist on the sea’s face, and a grey dawn breaking.”*

End essay.

Indianapolis Literary Club
January 22, 2019
Essayist: Stephen J. Jay M.D.
Nautical Brothers

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 Essay: *Nautical Brothers*
 Stephen J. Jay

References: Below are general references for this essay. They may enlighten, spur interest and further reading of these “nautical brothers”. For those who wish to see the detailed reference list of approximately 253 citations, please contact me. Author’s (SJJ) Annotations are included following some references.

General Reading:

Booth Tarkington (1869-1946)

Beer J. (Ed.) *America Moved: Booth Tarkington’s Memoirs of Time and Place, 1869-1928*. Eugene, OR: Front Porch Republic Books, 2015.

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<https://archive.org/details/boothtarkington00hollgoog/page/n6>.

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Woodress, J. *The Tarkington Papers*. Princeton U. Library Chronicle 1955;16(2)
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/26402872.pdf>.

Kenneth Roberts (1885-1957)

Bales J. Dartmouth College Library Bulletin: At the nadir of discouragement: The story of Dartmouth's Kenneth Roberts Collection. Dartmouth Library.

https://www.dartmouth.edu/~library/Library_Bulletin/Apr1990/LB-A90-Bales.html.

Bales J. *Kenneth Roberts: The Man and His Works*. Metuchen, NJ & London: Scarecrow Press, 1989.

Bales J. *Kenneth Roberts*. New York: Twayne Publishers. 1993.

Cohn J. *Creating America: George Horace Lorimer and The Saturday Evening Post*. Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1989.

Roberts K. *I Wanted to Write*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, Inc. 1949.

Special Collections:

Colby College Special Collections: Finding Aid to the Collection of Booth Tarkington materials, 1910-1949. TARK.1

Correspondence between Booth and Kenneth. <https://www.colby.edu/specialcollections/wp-content/uploads/sites/114/2014/07/booth-tarkington-collection.pdf>.

Archives and Special Collections, Phillips Exeter Academy (since 1781). Booth Tarkington.

<https://www.exeter.edu/academics/library/research-tools/archives-special-collections>.

Firestone Library, Princeton University, Rare Books and Special Collections.

rbsc@princeton.libanswers.com.

Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH. Rauner Special Collections. Correspondence of Booth Tarkington and Kenneth Roberts, circa 1919-1921.

Columbia University Archives, Butler Library, New York, NY. Columbia Spectator newspaper digital archives: ref to Tarkington articles and plays performed at Columbia.

<http://library.columbia.edu/locations/cuarchives/resources/prizes.html>. Spectator online archive: <http://spectatorarchive.library.columbia.edu/>.

End References:

Indianapolis Literary Club, January 22, 2019

Nautical Brothers

Essayist Stephen J. Jay M.D.

Indianapolis Literary Club. Jan 22, 2019

Essay: *Nautical Brothers*

Stephen J. Jay

Acknowledgments

I am grateful to those who aided my research: archivists, librarians, scholars, historians and authors, past and present, who have contributed to our knowledge of two preeminent American authors of the early 20th c., Newton Booth Tarkington and Kenneth Lewis Roberts.

- **Angela Courtney**, Head of Arts and Humanities, Librarian for English and American Literature Librarian Arts & Humanities, Herman B Wells Library. Indiana University, searched (2017) for references regarding the impact of the Romantic Era on Hoosier authors. Surprisingly, none were found for Indiana authors, Dreiser, Porter, Riley, Tarkington, and others.
- **Wendel Cox**, Princeton Library, provided four references to my request for personal correspondence between Kenneth Roberts and Booth Tarkington. (March 26, 2018) Princeton's Rauner Special Collections may hold salient materials.
- **Delores "Dee" Duff**, Shortridge Alumni Association kindly provided information regarding Booth Tarkington's tenure at Shortridge High School. Ms. Duff indicates that Tarkington attended the school when it was called Indianapolis High School. He did not graduate. He was often truant and his parents sent him to Phillip's Exeter Academy in New Hampshire. The book "Shortridge High School, In Retrospect" by Laura Sheering Gaus, is a valuable resource on this history. Copy—*Shortridge High School in Retrospect, Laura. Sheering Gaus*,. Box 6, Folder 6. Copy—Time Traveling Through Indianapolis with Kurt. Vonnegut, Jr.
- **Anne Farrow**, Volunteer Staff, Nathan R. Lipfert Research Library, **Maine Maritime Museum**, 243 Washington Street, Bath, Maine 04530-1638 provided several URLs for historical societies and museums in Kennebunk and Kennebunkport area that might have information on the bone ship model made at Dartmoor Prison and the subject of Kenneth Lewis Robert's writings of early American history.
The www.brickmuseumstore.org in Kennebunk; The www.oldyork.org in York;
The www.kennebunkporthistoricalsociety.com in Kennebunkport;
Also www.shipmodel.com; www.modelshipworld.com; and at the following I found a list of bone ships made by prisoners of war which have sold and have information and pictures.
<http://www.shipmodel.com/models/sort/type#prisoner%20of%20war%20model>.
- **Patricia FitzGerald**, Librarian/Archivist, Old York Historical Society, York, Maine kindly searched for the Bone Ship Model described by Kenneth Lewis Roberts as being made in Dartmoor Prison. She found no information. research@oldyork.org.
- **Bethany Flechter**, Rare Books and Manuscripts Supervisor, Indiana State Library, Indianapolis bflechter@library.in.gov found no correspondence between Tarkington and

Roberts in ISL collection. She found the Colby College Special Collection with such correspondence. Finding aid: <https://www.colby.edu/specialcollections/wp-content/uploads/sites/114/2014/07/booth-tarkington-collection.pdf>

- **Matt Holdzkom M.A.** Collections Assistant, Reference Services. Indiana Historical Society provided the George Lorimer Papers that contained correspondence of Booth Tarkington and Kenneth Roberts. Lorimer became Editor in Chief *Saturday Evening Post* in 1899 till his death, in 1936. These communications provide unique insight into the personalities of these men.
- **Alba Fernandez-Keys:** Head of Libraries & Archives Indianapolis Museum of Art (IMA) and Lydia Spotts, Associate Archivist, found about three boxes of Booth Tarkington materials including photo albums; library journals, news clips, and various information regarding the provenance of the many paintings, sculptures and art objects in Tarkington's collection. They had not searched for this in the past and were surprised at how much information they found. They intend to put the Tarkington project on their list with a goal of protecting some of the fragile materials and providing detailed information regarding the Tarkington archives. This material offered unique insights into the extent of Booth Tarkington's art collection, the quality of holdings, including Joshua Reynolds, Gainsborough, and other noted artists. Tarkington researched the art collection, wrote more than one book and was considered widely to be not only a connoisseur of art but an able art critic. His contributions to IMA were considerable along with those of JHA Clowes—the two were competitive in their interest and collecting and donations.
- **Dina Kellams**, Director Wells Library E460, Bloomington Indiana (archives@indiana.edu; dmkellam@indiana.edu: May 24, 2018, found Booth Tarkington communications with President William Lowe Bryan's (Collection C286.260) office circa 1924 and 1928 when Indiana University conferred on Booth Tarkington the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws. Bryan stated that only two artists had previously received this awards: James Whitcomb Riley and Theodore C. Steele. Tarkington wrote that it was impossible for him to attend the ceremony because he was being treated at Johns Hopkins Hospital for his blindness. Mrs. Susanah Tarkington, in a handwritten letter from Seawood to President Bryan, promises that Mr. Tarkington would come in the next year to receive the award. In March 6, 1929, Mrs. Tarkington writes Bryan that her husband is improved and may be able to come to Bloomington in May 1929 to receive the award. Dina Kellams found a few notes from President Well's files (Collection 213.527.) Also, Ms. Kellams found correspondence between Kenneth L. Roberts and E. Ross Bartley, circa 1928 (Bartley PR IU, and worked for U.S. VP Charles G. Dawes and presidential candidate Alf M. Landon) (Collection C311.2). The circumstances and names of persons mentioned in this correspondence are unclear to me but the correspondence vividly displays in Roberts' letters is the pugnacious tone and clever phrasing of his writing style. There was no information regarding Roberts and Bartley's personal relationship.
- **Leanne Hayden**, Brick Store Museum, Collections Manager 117 Main Street, Kennebunk, ME 04043, May 22 1018, confirmed they have one bone ship model but it was given by the Bodman family whose ancestors founded the Brick Store Museum. It was apparently not given by Roberts family at his death.

- **Peter Nelson**, Head of Archives and Special Collections, Phillips Exeter Academy (PEA) (since 1781). Exeter, New Hampshire, 03833, 603 772-4311. <https://www.exeter.edu>. Mr. Nelson reviewed the archives for Booth Tarkington's matriculation and graduation (1887-89) from Exeter, his curriculum and school activities and interest in writing. (<https://www.exeter.edu/academics/library/research-tools/archives-special-collections>) Tarkington came to Exeter from Indianapolis Shortridge High School (1864-2018), then called Indianapolis High School, where he was chronically truant. It is not clear the extent to which his brief experience at Shortridge shaped his interest in writing. Nelson provided access to *Letters from Booth Tarkington 1887-1889 to his family from Exeter*. These indicated Tarkington aspired to become an artist or illustrator, prepared sketches for PUCK and LIFE but was not satisfied with them. He was frustrated with his drawing and writing skills but in 1889 edited and wrote much of the annual undergraduate student Exeter publication, the *Pea*n. A mystery, however, is that after a year of work, it never was published. On April 22, 2018, Peter Nelson sent an article from Exeter newspaper (*Exonian*) from the Literary Monthly (Nov) that was highly critical of the failure of publication of the 1889 Pea n yearbook. Mr. Nelson did not find an answer to the mystery of why the Pea n was not published. But, Booth Tarkington's letter home clearly indicated the copy had been sent to the Boston publishers and that some money had been sent as well. Also in the PEA Archives was an article written by Tarkington "On Writing" in which he states: *"I didn't have any youthful dreams or expectations of being a writer. All the time I was at Exeter and Princeton and Purdue I hoped to be a painter or, if I wasn't up to that, at least an illustrator. I wrote a great deal, intermittently, but almost without realizing that I did. Out of college, I found I wasn't making any headway in art; but that I was apparently no much of my own volition in writing. The writing more or less seemed to compel itself on me whether I would or no..."*. Listings for Booth Tarkington in Archives. [https://biblion.exeter.edu/search~SO/X?SEARCH=\(Tarkington\)&SORT=D](https://biblion.exeter.edu/search~SO/X?SEARCH=(Tarkington)&SORT=D).
- **Anna Lee Pauls**, reference Assistant March 27, 2018, Rare Books and Special Collections, Firestone Library rbsc@princeton.libanswers.com. <https://rbsc.princeton.edu>. Booth Tarkington Collection. (Letters and memorabilia)
- **Laura Schieb** Reference Specialist, Rauner Special Collections Library, Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH provided my requested documents of correspondence between Tarkington and Roberts circa 1919 and 1921 the beginning of their friendship. Scans of hand written letters and typed transcripts were provided from documents located in the Kenneth Roberts papers ML25, Box 19.
- **Mary Sego** Purdue University Archives & Special Collections, Archives Processing Assistant, 4/23/18 kindly provided links to Booth Tarkington materials including when he attended PU. She shared the Debris Yearbook from 1891 where Booth Tarkington contributed several images. Booth Tarkington was a PU student from fall 1890 to the spring of 1891. He then attended Princeton. Booth Tarkington Collection: --Box Communal Collections 12, Placement: 20 Identifier: MSA 223. https://archives.lib.purdue.edu/search?utf8=✓&op%5B%5D=&q%5B%5D=newton+booth+tarkington&limit=&field%5B%5D=&from_year%5B%5D=&to_year%5B%5D=&commit=S

earc. <https://archives.lib.purdue.edu/repositories/2/resources/1092>.

<http://earchives.lib.purdue.edu/cdm/ref/collection/debris/id/13684>.

- **Lydia Spotts**: Associate Archivist/Librarian. Indianapolis Museum of Art at Newfields. lspotts@discovernewfields.org, kindly provided access to web documents at IMA and other archives regarding Tarkington's art collection, papers and correspondence. IMA does not have correspondence between Booth Tarkington and Kenneth Roberts, who were close friends. IMA does not hold Tarkington's own sketches but has several paintings from Tarkington's art collection of primarily 17-18th c artwork. Reviewed Tarkington IMA material on site on 4/24/18.
- **Morgan Swan** (morgan.R.Swan@dartmouth.edu) In addition, I would like to ask if your research staff could access the Guide to the Papers of Kenneth Roberts, 1890-1972, ML-25, Series 1, Papers. Box 84, Dates: May 1957-May 1959. https://ead.dartmouth.edu/html/ml25_Series1_Boxes_d3e13609.html. The entry is "Thomas Macdonough; Re. Privateer Brig MacDonough" on line 18. Specifically, I would be interested in correspondence of Kenneth Roberts regarding this ship model. A partial photograph of this model is found on the back cover of Roberts' 1949 book *I Wanted to Write*. It's a photo by "Brown" Kennebunkport. Morgan Swan of Dartmouth Library provided images dated April 9, 1958 and 2 April 1958. First letter from A. Wilding, CDR, USN, US Naval Air Station, GLYNCO, Brunswick, GA to Doubleday and Co. New York. 'On June 27, 1958 on the cover of "This Week" magazine in *Washington DC Star* Newspaper, Mr. Kenneth Roberts was pictured sitting behind a two-masted schooner. (Wilding interested in details about receiving a picture of the vessel-- its rigging which appears to be unique—from Mr. Roberts wife. The reply is from ?? Mr. Roberts wife: "The Estate of" at top. "Doubleday forwarded your letter re the above. "The ship is the PRIVATEER BRIG *MACDONOUGH* of which Mr. Roberts' great-grandfather, Daniel Nason, was sailing master in 1914. The privateer *MacDonough* was manned with Arundel (Kennebunkport) men, many of them sea-captains. She was armed with one long 24 and 4- 6-pound carronades. She was captured Nov 1, 1814 in lat. 42, long .67 by the Bacchante frigate after a long chase. Mr. Kenneth Roberts' model of the MacDonough was made for him in 1941 by W.C. Leavitt, RF D #2, Warren, Maine. I do not know if Mr. Leavitt is still living. I thought I had specifications for the MacDonough, but at the moment I cannot put my fingers on them. Very sincerely yours, Secretary...(there is no signature)
- **Beth Swift**, Archivist, Lilly Library, Wabash College, Crawfordsville, IN. swift@wabash.edu. 765-361-6378. Beth Swift is kindly searching for correspondence between or among Booth Tarkington and Presidents of Wabash from 1900 to the 1940s, Wabash Trustees or faculty; also for possible correspondence among the Presidents, Tarkington, Wabash Leaders and Eli Lilly or other Lilly leaders, including Dr. Clowes .
- **Jocelyn Wilk**, Columbia University Archives, Butler Library, New York, NY provided the date when Booth Tarkington received his honorary degree (Litt. D.) on 1924, June 4, at that year's commencement ceremony. The Columbia Spectator newspaper, a digital archive has numerous references to Booth Tarkington, specifically articles and announcements of his plays that were often performed at Columbia.

<http://library.columbia.edu/locations/cuarchives/resources/prizes.html>. Spectator online archive: <http://spectatorarchive.library.columbia.edu/>.

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