

biography, Wesley noted that his subject had been an achiever even though 'oppressed by the injustices of life,' and he urged the readers of the work to 'take example from him' and recreate his spirit in their lives.

Taken as a whole, Wesley's writings are not outdated. His overriding aim was to set the record straight about blacks, but this goal did not come at the expense of scholarship and equanimity. His advocacy bore no prejudice. Hence his perspectives on the past were marked by their humanistic tones.

Wesley was elected to membership in the American Antiquarian Society in April 1977. No stranger to the Society, he had previously made use of its collections in his research on Prince Hall. In October 1982, having vainly sought to procure Wesley's book on the Ohio Masons for the Society, Marcus McCorison asked Wesley for a copy of the book. McCorison's explanation was brief but whole-hearted: 'I would like to have the book not only for its subject but also because of the author.'

Wesley's long career came to a not-unexpected end on August 16, 1987. Memorial services were held a week later at the Metropolitan A.M.E. Church in Washington, one of those of which he had been minister. He is survived by Charlotte Wesley Holloman, a daughter by his late first wife, and by his second wife, Dorothy Burnett Porter, also an AAS member and the foremost authority on the ever-broadening field of Afro-American bibliography.

Benjamin Quarles

### JACOB ISRAEL ZEITLIN

Jacob Israel Zeitlin died on August 30, 1987, having devoted sixty of his eighty-four years to selling rare books, manuscripts, and art in several colorful and congenial bookstores of Los Angeles. Like Los Angeles, his business grew, prospered, and sprawled until it

filled his commodious Red Barn near Beverly Hills, amply stocked with books of all kinds and featuring Jake himself, a beguiling host, consummate salesman, and dedicated scholar.

In 1925 Jake hitchhiked to this city from Fort Worth, Texas, where his family ran a business making vinegar and condiments. He had attended high school there and had written some poetry (which was published with a glowing introduction by Carl Sandburg). Otherwise nothing recommended him for a bookselling career beyond a love of literature and a capacity to inspire trust and friendship. He started out as a clerk in downtown bookstores, lost his first position because of 'incompetence,' and after other misadventures set off on his own—selling books door-to-door from stock he carried about in a satchel. Some of his first books were bought with borrowed funds guaranteed by a loyal customer, others were sold on consignment from the venerable London firm of Maggs Bros., from then on closely allied with Jake and his business.

He occupied several shops during those precarious years, not always spacious but certainly stylish quarters: Lloyd Wright, son of Frank Lloyd Wright, planned two of his stores, and all of them included a gallery for the display of prints, photographs, and drawings. Käthe Kollwitz, Edward Weston, and other artists owed some of their earliest exhibitions to his discerning eye and influential support. Journalists, screenwriters, and local authors also congregated on the premises, either to buy, talk, or transact business with the Primavera Press, which published a couple dozen handsome books during the early 1930s. Jake collaborated on these and later publications with a few close friends and whatever talent might come to hand. When appointed to sell D. H. Lawrence's manuscripts, for example, he persuaded the Los Angeles Public Library to sponsor an exhibit, the bookman Lawrence Clark Powell to compile a catalogue, the novelist Aldous Huxley to write an introduction, and the printer Ward Ritchie to devise a suitable design. One of his customers helped pay for the project, a slim but elegant volume reflecting credit on all concerned. Then, as always, he championed fine letterpress typography, which often

lent a note of distinction of his catalogues and those of Zeitlin & Ver Brugge, numbering about three hundred in all.

Jake weathered the Depression, just barely, and settled down to far more prosperous times with an important innovation, the Ver Brugge of the firm. His third wife, Josephine Ver Brugge, contributed serenity and a sound business sense that tempered his more impulsive nature and steadied the pace of his affairs. While raising a family, she seconded him in the shop, accompanied him on book-buying trips abroad, and ran a profitable sideline dealing in out-of-print medical and scientific periodicals.

Business picked up considerably when Jake began to specialize in the history of science, not an entirely new field in his day but as yet hardly explored. Alone or with a partner, he sold to various institutions across America five of the seven libraries assembled by Herbert M. Evans, a pioneering and compulsive collector. Robert B. Honeyman bought from him or with his advice early editions ranging from Aristotle to Einstein, not to mention long runs of Euclid and Galileo. He encouraged the transfer of these books too into institutional hands either by purchase or gift, and when his best efforts failed, he arranged for their sale at Sotheby's at record-breaking prices. If not so glamorous at auction, American science often merited a page or two in his catalogues, whether to notice such standard fare as Michaux's *North American Sylva* or to grapple with a bibliographically obscure *Ichthyology of South Carolina*. He published some of his bibliographical discoveries in *Isis*, the journal of the History of Science Society, and generously supported the society as well.

Scientific books were by no means his only stock in trade. At one time or another, a research library or an ambitious collector could obtain holograph letters of George Washington accepting the presidency; an Isaiah Thomas Bible, bound by Henry Bilson Legge; or a first edition, first issue of Thomas Paine's *Common Sense*. On dustier, less-frequented shelves, a bargain hunter could find stray volumes of *The Port Folio* or an only slightly shaken copy of David Humphrey's *Miscellaneous Works*. The Red Barn regularly replenished sections devoted to secondhand and current publica-

tions—English and American literature, reference works, fine printing, as well as monographs on art and design. A table displaying the latest works of Jake's favorite authors stood in the center of the store, within arm's reach of where he liked to sit and chat with customers and friends.

In 1983 he joined with H. P. Kraus of New York to sell a collection of 144 medieval and Renaissance manuscripts to the J. Paul Getty Museum, a splendid sampling of script and illumination representing the best work of monastic scriptoria and the most renowned ateliers of the Netherlands, France, Germany, and Italy. It was perhaps his greatest bookselling triumph, requiring complex and protracted negotiations at an age when all but one or two of his surviving colleagues were long retired. While he slowed down in his later years, he never stopped dealing in art and literature, even when hospitalized during his last illness. Just a few months before he died, he procured for a Los Angeles collector the famous 'blinking Sam' portrait of Samuel Johnson, painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds.

He was elected to the American Antiquarian Society in April 1976. Although unable to attend meetings, he maintained a lively interest in the Society's activities, particularly the Program in the History of the Book in American Culture. He was also a member of the Grolier Club, the Zamorano Club, and several library organizations. He received an honorary doctorate from Occidental College. Colleagues, customers, and friends contributed essays in his honor to *A Garland for Jake Zeitlin* (1967), to celebrate his sixty-fifth birthday, and to the autumn 1982 issue of *The Book Collector*, to celebrate his eightieth. The tributes in *The Book Collector* follow a photograph of Jake at the door of the Red Barn, an amiable portrait of a strikingly handsome man whose mischievous smile and carefree attire readily bring to mind how he relished his magnificent old age and how he welcomed the company of good books and those who study them.

John Bidwell

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