PHILADELPHIA’S LITERARY LEGACY MAKES FOR A NOVEL VISIT
Authors’ Homes, Notable Libraries & Independent Bookstores In The Philadelphia Region

PHILADELPHIA, March 27, 2019 – Literary roots run deep in Philadelphia, a city that has inspired writers and continues to nurture their legacies. Anchoring the local reading scene is the Parkway Central Library, the main branch of the Philadelphia Free Library, on the historic Benjamin Franklin Parkway. On April 12, 2019, Parkway Central unveils its first renovation since its construction in 1927. Architects relocated six historic stacks to create 41,000 square feet of space for a modern business resource and innovation center, an inclusive cultural and civic engagement space and a welcoming teen center—thereby increasing the venue’s public accessibility by one third.

Throughout the region, lovers of literature can connect with such classic authors as Poe (Edgar Allan Poe National Historic Site), Buck (Pearl S. Buck House Museum) and Michener (Michener Art Museum) in places where they lived, worked and created celebrated works. This year, Philadelphia and over-the-river Camden, New Jersey honor the bicentennial of native son Walt Whitman’s birth with art exhibitions and installations, poetry readings, workshops and community gatherings that are all part of Whitman at 200. Independent booksellers are also a longtime part of Philadelphia’s literary landscape. Standouts include Old City’s The Book Trader, University City’s House of Our Own, Rittenhouse Square’s Joseph Fox Bookshop and Fishtown’s programming-rich, avant-guard Ulises.

Here’s a look at some of the region’s literary locales and independently owned booksellers:

Authorly Attractions:

- **Edgar Allan Poe National Historic Site** – The house where the critic, editor, poet and author lived when he published *The Black Cat* and *The Spectacles* offers self-guided and 30- to 45-minute Park Ranger-led tours Friday through Sunday. As guests wander the six rooms and cellar of the house, they conjure images of the erratic and gifted Poe, best known for his macabre mysteries and credited with inventing the detective fiction genre. Afterwards, visitors may step into the reading room, patterned after Poe’s essay *The Philosophy of Furniture*, to listen to various recordings of Poe’s works, including Christopher Walken’s reading of *The Raven*. 532 N. 7th Street, (215) 597-8780, [nps.gov/edal](http://nps.gov/edal)

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• **Michener Art Museum** – Bucks County has been home to several famous authors throughout the centuries (Oscar Hammerstein II, Pearl S. Buck, Margaret Mead, George Kaufman), as evidenced at the museum, named for Doylestown native son and Pulitzer Prize winner James A. Michener, who penned such books as *Tales of the South Pacific*. Tucked into a corner of the art museum is a recreation of the Bucks County office where Michener worked for more than 35 years. Objects on his desk include two autographed baseballs from the Baltimore Orioles, his Olympia typewriter and a Doylestown High School T-shirt. 138 S. Pine Street, Doylestown, (215) 340-9800, michenerartmuseum.org

• **Pearl S. Buck House Museum** – In pastoral Bucks County Buck’s home of almost 40 years keeps alive the legacy of the first woman to receive both the Nobel and Pulitzer prizes for literature. In this still-furnished house, Buck wrote most of her 120 books, more than 400 short stories, 10 children’s books and numerous pieces of journalism. Visitors can peruse the rooms on their own or take a one-hour tour to view permanent and rotating exhibitions that display her prizes, art, manuscripts, correspondence, memoirs and personal effects, including the desk and typewriter she used to write *The Good Earth*. Buck is buried on the National Historic Landmark site. 520 Dublin Road, Perkasie, (215) 249-0100, pearlsbuck.org/tourthehouse

• **The Walt Whitman House** – Walt Whitman’s lifelong circa 1848 home, a few blocks from the Camden, New Jersey waterfront, is where the *Leaves of Grass* author hosted friends Oscar Wilde and Bram Stoker, completed his finale volume of poetry and, in 1892, died. Guided tours of the New Jersey State Historic Site and National Historic Landmark reveal Whitman’s letters, belongings, his deathbed, the death notice once nailed to the front door and rare 19th-century photographs, including the earliest known image of the poet. 330 Mickle Boulevard, Camden, NJ, (856) 964-5383, state.nj.us/dep/parksandforests/historic/whitman

**Expansive Collections:**

• **Free Library of Philadelphia, Parkway Central Branch** – A stunning Beaux Arts building along the culture-packed Benjamin Franklin Parkway serves as the flagship of a citywide organization that includes 61 neighborhood libraries, a research center and community centers. In addition to typical library activities—borrowing books and accessing free Internet—visitors here can explore a massive collection of notable and rare works by Charles Dickens, Edgar Allan Poe, Beatrix Potter and others. The library hosts author readings and lectures, special exhibitions and events all year long. Insider tip: Charles Dickens’ taxidermied pet bird Grip, thought to be Poe’s inspiration for *The Raven*, resides upon a pedestal in the Rare Book Department. 1901 Vine Street, (215) 686-5322, freelibrary.org

• **The Rosenbach** – Some of the world’s greatest literary treasures are on view at this 1860s brownstone holding the personal collection of the Rosenbach brothers, 19th-century dealers in fine and decorative art, rare books and manuscripts. A best-known feature of the collection is James Joyce’s manuscript for *Ulysses*, but equally impressive are more than 600 Lewis Carroll books, letters and rare photos, many directly related to *Alice in Wonderland*. Not to be overlooked: Shakespeare’s 1664 folio and several playbills from 18th-century Shakespeare performances in Philadelphia; important first editions of *Don Quixote* and other works by Cervantes; William Blake’s original drawings and books; portions of Charles Dickens’ manuscripts; notes and outlines for Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*; and almost all of modernist poet Marianne Moore’s manuscripts and correspondence. 2008-2010 Delancey Place, (215) 732-1600, rosenbach.org

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The Charles L. Blockson Afro-American Collection, Temple University Libraries – This collection serves as one of the nation’s leading research facilities for the study of the history and culture of people of African descent. The compilation of 700,000 items includes contemporary and rare publications, prints, photographs, manuscripts, letters, sheet music, foreign-language publications, film and ephemera, along with first editions by Phyllis Wheatley, W.E.B. Du Bois, George Washington Williams and other notable authors. Visitors can page through narratives written or dictated by Olaudah Equiano, Ignatius Sancho, Prince Lee Boo, Sojourner Truth, Frederick Douglass and Nancy Prince in the slave narratives section. Sullivan Hall, 1330 Polett Walk, 1st Floor, (215) 204-6632. library.temple.edu/collections/blockson

The Black Writers Museum – The only U.S. museum that focuses exclusively on Black literature by classic and contemporary writers occupies the historic Vernon House in Germantown. Here, visitors find hundreds of significant items and artifacts: rare newspapers and documents, manuscripts, recordings, photographs and first edition and signed books. The museum’s Ida B. Wells Library and Resource Center contains more than one thousand books, including titles by Zora Neale Hurston, Michael Crowder, Sapphire and Jacob H. Carruthers. Visitors can attend the museum’s writing classes, book clubs and other events and festivals. 5800 Germantown Avenue, (267) 297-3078. blackwritersmuseum.com

Historical Society of Pennsylvania – A century-old brick and marble building listed on the City of Philadelphia’s Register of Historical Places is home to 600,000 printed books and 21 million manuscript items. The collection, popular among academics and researchers, covers topics from more than 350 years of U.S. history, and occasional evening programs feature notable speakers, including historians, authors and archeologists. 1300 Locust Street, (215) 732-6200, hsp.org

The Library Company – Founded by Benjamin Franklin in 1731, this independent research library focusing on 17th- to 19th-century American society and culture is said to be the country’s oldest cultural institution. The library, free and open to the public, houses a rare collection of books, photography, manuscripts and art and regularly hosts exhibits, lectures and other special public programs. 1314 Locust Street, (215) 546-3181, librarycompany.org

Independent Bookstores:

Baldwin’s Book Barn – This five-story, 1822-built, Chester County stone barn is a bibliophile’s wonderland, with more than 300,000 books. Throughout the space’s nooks and crannies, avid readers and collectors find shelf after shelf lined with antiquarian, rare and fine books, as well as thousands of used books, maps and original prints. 865 Lenape Road, West Chester, (610) 696-0816. bookbarn.com

The Book Trader – When the tall shelves of this Old City stalwart get too packed with used books, the overflow makes a home wherever the staff can find space, adding an element of discovery to each visit. The two-story shop offers store credit for trade-ins and maintains one of the largest collections of books in the city. 7 N. 2nd Street, (215) 925-2080. phillybooktrader.com

Brickbat Books – Rare first-edition tomes and brand-new graphic novels populate the wooden shelves of the small shop along Philadelphia’s Fabric Row. With creaky floors and a quiet atmosphere, it’s a great spot to discover a fondness for Edward Gorey, score a hard-to-find book on design or rediscover that once-obsessed-over children’s book. 709 S. 4th Street, (215) 592-1207, brickbatbooks.com
• **Farley’s Bookshop** – For more than 46 years, New Hope, Bucks County’s Farley’s has surprised readers with a collection of small-press publications, works by local authors, blockbuster and indie bestsellers, literary gems and children’s books. In addition to a monthly book club, the store keeps a busy schedule of author events and book signings. 44 S. Main Street, New Hope, (215) 862-2452, farleysbookshop.com

• **House of Our Own** – In a two-story Victorian townhouse adjacent to the University of Pennsylvania campus, this quiet, quirky bookseller has been selling new and used, general and scholarly books for close to 50 years. 3920 Spruce Street, (215) 222-1576, biblio.com/bookstore/house_of_our_own_philadelphia

• **Joseph Fox Bookshop** – When book lovers ascend the steps into this Rittenhouse Square bookshop, they find a finely curated selection of literature, non-fiction works, art, architecture, design, music and poetry, as well as new and classic children’s books. The shop, a staple of Philadelphia’s literary scene since 1951, participates in 200 author events a year and offers an impressive selection of signed first printings, and if it isn’t on the shelves, the staff can turn around special orders quickly, often the next day. 1724 Sansom Street, (215) 563-4184, foxbookshop.com

• **Penn Book Center** – Independently owned since 1962, this University City shop is a place for readers to discover books they might have otherwise missed. Philosophy, poetry and gorgeous children’s books comprise the center’s selection of titles, and events attract a community of thoughtful readers to witness great writers from Philadelphia and beyond. 130 S. 34th Street, (215) 222-7600, pennbookcenter.com

• **Philly AIDS Thrift at Giovanni’s Room** – Two of Philadelphia’s iconic indie shops, Giovanni’s Room and Philly AIDS Thrift, merged to revive the nation’s longest-running LGBT bookstore. The Gayborhood landmark continues to sell a huge selection of new and used LGBT-themed books and has expanded its offerings to include a fine selection of vintage items, clothing, CDs, vinyl and more. 345 S. 12th Street, (215) 923-2960, queerbooks.com

• **Port Richmond Books** – Housed in a renovated silent movie theater in the heart of Port Richmond, this bookstore has a collection of 200,000 volumes covering sci-fi and pulp fiction along with rare and collectible first editions. Readings and events are held on the Author’s Lounge and Stage, decked out with overstuffed chairs. There’s even an indoor basketball court. 3037 Richmond Street, (215) 425-3385, portrichmondbooks.com

• **Ulises** – This spare, contemporary Fishtown bookstore distinguishes itself with a collection of artist-driven books and magazines, along with live readings, performance art and incredibly independent film screenings. Open weekends only. 31 E. Columbia Avenue, (267) 702-0123, ulises.us

• **Wellington Square** – A rare indie bookstore in the Chester County suburbs, this shopping center location offers new, used and rare books and a coffee bar. 549 Wellington Square, Exton, (610) 458-1144, wellingtonsquarebooks.com

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*Note to Editors: For high-resolution photos and high-definition B-roll of Greater Philadelphia, visit the Photos & Video section of visitphilly.com/mediacenter.*