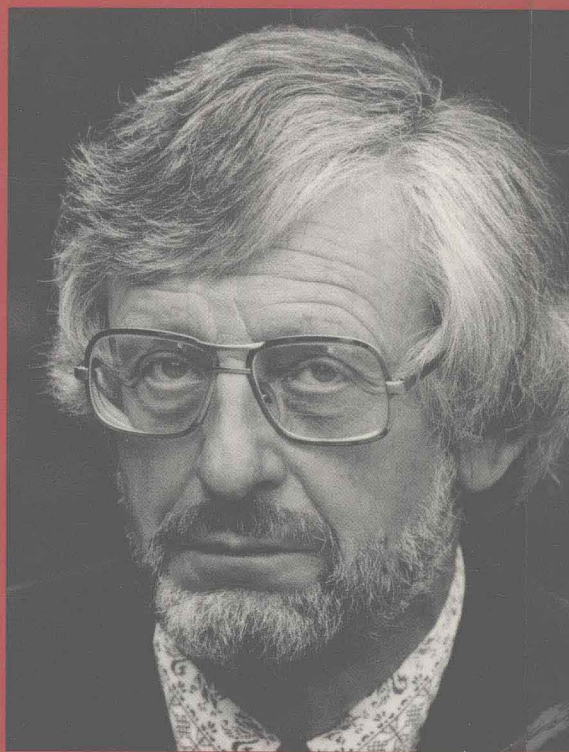


A Sceptic Among Scholars

AUGUST FRUGÉ ON UNIVERSITY PUBLISHING



AUGUST FRUGÉ



A Skeptic Among Scholars

August Frugé
on University Publishing

AUGUST FRUGÉ

University of California Press

BERKELEY • LOS ANGELES • LONDON

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Title page photo: spiral staircase to the second floor of the Press building on Oxford Street. Photo by David Renick.

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mind and so remained for more than a generation. The complete catalogue of the first fifty years of Press publications contained 13 pages listing books and 120 pages of serial monographs, 25 or 30 to a page. Such was President Wheeler's press, modified only a little since his time, when I came upon it at the end of that first half-century, in 1944. I exaggerate only a little and in the direction of truth.

If Lawson was a kind of father to the Press and Shinn a kind of mother—although there is no record of their even speaking to each other—then the godfather, in the Sicilian sense, was President Benjamin Ide Wheeler, who reigned over the University from 1899 to 1919, a despot, benevolent of course. He controlled the Press as he controlled everything else. It was he who obtained the second publishing grant, and from then on he created the Press in—if not in his own image then in the German image that he knew from his student days in Leipzig, Jena, Berlin, and Heidelberg.

I have not always known this. Although, as a publisher, I grew up with the University Series, lived with them for thirty-some years, and although I knew of the great Wheeler, it never occurred to me in all those years that it was he who invented the Press, determined its character. Reading in Albert Muto's book¹ that more than twenty new subject series were established in Wheeler's time, I got down the old fiftieth-anniversary *Catalogue* and checked the dates of first publication. There I found with growing wonder that all but a few of the great series, the prolific ones, those that made the reputation of the early Press, were begun under Wheeler. These included Alfred Kroeber's noted American Archaeology and Ethnology, which eventually ran to several hundred papers in more than fifty volumes. And there was the most numerous group of all, the several series in the life sciences: Botany, Entomology, Zoology. Although monograph series were less useful in the humanities, the Wheeler regime established Philosophy, Modern Philology (meaning modern European literatures), Classical Philology, and others.

1. *The University of California Press: The Early Years, 1893–1953* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1993). Many of these early facts are taken from Muto's book.

Wheeler permitted no publications but monographs in series, all written by Berkeley professors and graduate students. No books, no royalties, no advertising except bare lists, virtually no sales, no practices remotely commercial in nature. Distribution was primarily by exchange with other libraries. And this ancien régime survived the monarch. After 1919 there was no revolution and not much evolution. In spite of several early attempts at change, it was only much later, in its second half-century, that the University of California Press became a book-publishing house of the Oxbridge kind.

An early move for change came from Albert Allen, who in 1905 was made manager of the Press, meaning copyeditor, printing arranger, stock clerk, jack of all duties. He had ideas about what ought to be done and in 1914 took a leave of absence without pay—Wheeler would not let him go with pay—to visit the presses at Chicago, Harvard, and Yale. On his return, wishing to report his findings, he sought an audience with the president. This he never got. Three years later, about to join the wartime army, he turned in a written report, criticizing the Press as narrow and provincial.

To me it is not at all surprising that Allen never got his hearing, for I had some acquaintance with a later president whose style was not so different from Wheeler's. There was, I remember, an occasion in the 1950s when the Editorial Committee, composed of senior faculty members, requested an appointment with President Robert Gordon Sproul to discuss the future of the Press. They got the appointment—one year later. Sproul was also renowned in those days for refusing to take telephone calls. Since he would accept long-distance calls, I sometimes traveled to our Los Angeles office and called from there.

After Allen there was a succession of faculty managers or assistant managers of the Press, most of them scholars of Greek and Latin. The most notable of these, and also the last, was George Miller Calhoun, who was assisted and spelled by Ivan Linforth. It was the two of them, as recounted later in this volume, who transformed the Sather Professorship of Classical Literature into a lecture series with book publication. This was in 1920, one year after Wheeler. If the president

had served—but that is not the *mot juste*—if he had continued in power for another few years, the finest classical lecture series anywhere might never have been born.

Calhoun, like Allen, had an interest in publishing as such. In 1930 he recommended to the new president, Sproul, that the Press be reorganized along broader lines. Now one could never be sure that Sproul read the memos that came to him, but perhaps he did read this one because a few years later he brought in the first outside professional manager, Samuel T. Farquhar, who was my predecessor and mentor. Farquhar's own recommendations, similar to those of Calhoun, were accepted, and a new era was at hand. Or so it seemed.

But the old system was essential to the research programs of a number of powerful academic departments; it continued to dominate. And Farquhar, although an educated man, was most interested in books as physical objects; he was more printer than publisher, having as background the fine printing movement in San Francisco. He came to Berkeley in 1932 as University printer, succeeding Joseph W. Flinn, who had been in charge of the plant for forty-five years. The following year Sproul gave Farquhar a second appointment as manager of the Press, approving his proposal that the two organizations be combined and be called the University of California Press. Out of that union (I say with hindsight) came more trouble and dissension than anyone cares to remember—anyone who took part.

Farquhar's printing exploits are worth some attention and will get that in a later chapter. In his clear mind he knew that his success had been gained in printing and book design, and by the middle 1940s he had observed other university presses, with their more lively publishing programs; he could see that the postwar years would require something comparable in Berkeley. So he made a number of new appointments, and it happened that I was one of these; a few years later he put me in charge of the publishing side of the Press. But the problems were great, the old way was resistant, and we were amateurs. Not very much had been accomplished when Farquhar died suddenly in 1949. He did not live to see the transformation of the Press as publisher.

Soon after I came, he took me to a university press meeting in wintry Chicago and introduced me to the presses of the east and midwest. Looking around to see what I could learn, I saw that a few presses—at private universities and at two state universities—were doing a professional job of book publishing, and I sat around tables in bars listening and asking questions. In those first days I remember especially the practical wisdom that dropped from the lips of Datus Smith of Princeton, Norman Donaldson of Yale, and Savoie Lottinville of Oklahoma. There were others, of course, not all of them directors. Among famous directors of the time was Bill Couch, first of North Carolina and then of Chicago, who was later to be fired for publishing a book when his university told him not to; although there was a California connection, we had nothing to do with either decision.² Two great directors I did not meet until later. Joe Brandt had moved on from Oklahoma and Princeton to commercial publishing; he will come into the California story in the 1950s. Tom Wilson of North Carolina and Harvard was just coming out of the navy.

From this handful of presses, competently run in the manner of a good trade publishing house, I formed the idea of what California ought to be, of what it might become. Although two of them—Princeton and Oklahoma—operated printing shops that were approximately as capable as ours, their directors and their other people talked like publishers rather than printers. What they and others said was enormously exciting to me. I went home with a head full of ideas.

Here I take up the California story as the second half-century of the Press begins, in 1944, describing first the old Press as I knew it, and then attempting a personal story of its transformation, including the many changes that have led up to the Press of today. As a partici-

2. In California Dorothy S. Thomas, head of a research project entitled Japanese American Evacuation and Resettlement, hired a number of people, including Morton Grodzins, to collect material for use in her books, *The Spoilage* (1946) and *The Salvage* (1952), both of which we published. She thought the material belonged to her, but Grodzins carried his off and wrote his own book. She (not the Press) complained to the Chicago administration, which told Couch not to publish the book. He, invoking freedom of speech, did so anyway. In an amusing twist, Grodzins later became director of the Chicago press for a short time.

pant, I offer not history but a memoir, an informal account of what happened. The great character change took place within my time. I coincided with it, paralleled it, survived it, arriving when the old style was still dominant and leaving after it had given way to the new.

The story as I remember it cannot be strung on a single chronological thread; topics will override chronology; and much will not be clear without glances before and after. For those before I depend on the research done by Albert Muto as set forth in his book, and especially on his examination of the papers of the University presidents, where he turned up many matters new to me, including some from my own time. I have also leaned on—have sometimes cannibalized—my earlier writings, some published and some not, especially on the booklet entitled *The Metamorphoses of the University of California Press* (Berkeley, 1986). For the years and events after the Press was made separate and allowed to seek a publishing future—for the greater part of this account—I must depend on a partial collection of my old papers and, for better or worse, on memory.

The memory has its own will. We cannot control what it brings to light and what it buries, although we can sometimes tease it—if not with madeleines dipped in tea then more prosaically with old letters. We can also do our best not to falsify, not to exaggerate beyond reason or in the wrong direction, especially in dealing with other participants. Most of those I deal with are no longer living. *De Mortuis . . .*, it is said, but the dead deserve honest treatment. My small portraits, wherever possible, are double-sided, shown recto and verso, in the book terms used as subtitle to one chapter.

My portraits of the old Berkeley and the old Press will show clearly enough that I regret the passing of the one, which I observed, and have mixed feelings about changes to the other, changes that were in part my doing. We shall not see either again.

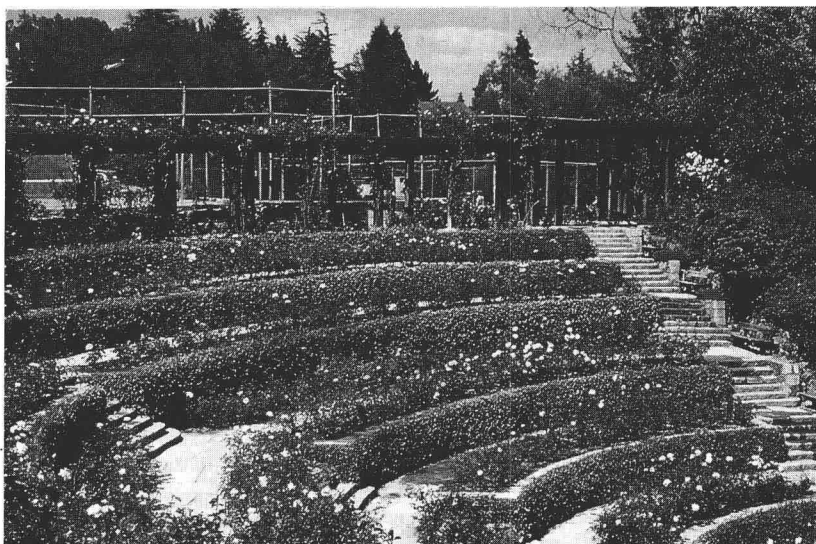
2 Berkeley in the 1940s

The Place and How

I Came to Be There

When I came back to Berkeley in the fall of 1944 the country was still at war, but the city had not yet taken up arms against the rest of the nation nor had it seen fit to adopt its own foreign policy. These adventures lay a couple of decades in the future. Berkeley was then, as when I lived there in the late thirties, a college and commuter town, where passionate commitments were more intellectual and personal than political. It was sometimes called a city of eccentric professors and of little old ladies in tennis shoes, up-ended in the garden.

Gardens large and small, public and private, were omnipresent, and surely they defined the character of the place as well as anything did. Still in existence, they no longer define. Then almost every house in the Berkeley hills had its private garden of shrubs and annuals, growing lushly in the mixed climate of sun and fog. Public ones included two splendid botanical gardens, the University Garden in Strawberry Canyon, behind the stadium, and the Regional Parks Botanic Garden in Tilden Park, just over the hills in Wildcat Canyon. One grew plants from all parts of the world, the other from every part of California. There was the fine, terraced Municipal Rose Garden in Codornices Park and the Salbach commercial garden high in the hills. Next door to Salbach my old library school teacher, Sidney B. Mitchell, tended his flower beds and wrote popular books about them, such as *In a Sunset Garden*. Ira Cross, professor of economics, hybridized chrysanthemums behind his tall house on Le Roy Avenue—a house built by



Rose Garden, Berkeley.

the architect Walter Steilberg on the ashes of the great Berkeley fire of 1923. My wife and I lived there many years later, as second owners.

A few words of nostalgia will not conceal—to those who know—the acute problems of university and town life or the toughness and combativeness of the inhabitants, including gardeners. Deer sometimes walked the streets of the hill districts and at night nipped the buds off rose bushes and devoured much else. On those streets to the east, bordering Tilden Regional Park, a sort of guerrilla war went on. Deer lived in the park by day and raided the town by night—as political activists were later accused of using the University as a staging area for attacks on the community. In one area a gang of three deer showed up every nightfall. Nothing could be done to stop the devastation, it seemed, until word got to James B. Roof, supervisor of the botanic garden in the Park, a man no less eccentric than any professor and no respecter of city or park regulations. Recruiting two friends and three shotguns, he lay in ambush one evening. The three deer appeared. The guns went off. Years later Roof told me that the first thing he heard, as blue smoke rose in the dusk, was a child cry-

ing: "Oh, they're shooting Bambi." The second sound was the voice of a housewife: "Did you get the sons-o-bitches?"

That was only an early skirmish; greater battles could be waged by the alliance of private and public gardeners. Some years later the director of all the regional parks was William Penn Mott, Jr., an ambitious man who was to become Ronald Reagan's director of the National Park Service. Mott decided to move that same Regional Parks Botanic Garden to a new site in East Oakland, and install in its place a pony-riding playground. One wonders, did he really think that botanic gardens were mobile, like some homes, and that he could pick one up and put it down elsewhere without mortal harm? The impulsive Jim Roof, who had spent twenty-five years creating the garden out of nothing on a couple of empty hillsides, might have taken the same shotgun to Mott. With uncharacteristic restraint he appealed to the private gardeners of Berkeley.

And it was they—a group that included a few professors of botany and physics, but mostly the embattled housewives of Berkeley—who fought a war with Mott, beat him down, and forced him to give up his plan. That little victory under their belt, this group of mostly amateurs organized itself into the California Native Plant Society and set out to save the native flora of California from bulldozers, developers, and the over-use of imported plants. From that small Berkeley beginning, the society has grown into a statewide group with active local chapters from Arcata to San Diego. And in imitation similar societies have sprung up in all the other western states. Some call this a nobler, a less self-serving, cause than other more strident ones.

Berkeley, of course, was not all gardens. Nor all hillsides. Social historians make much of differences between the hills and the flat lands to the west—perhaps too much. I lived years in both sections. In the thirties and forties we flatlanders felt no social distinction; the hills were handsomer and costlier, that was all, and we moved there when we could. Later a number of changes, including a new racial mixture brought on by war industry, had political repercussions. Even so, not everyone is a *zōon politikon*. In troubled times there were

thousands who lived in Berkeley and paid little attention to the squabbling city council, who never walked past People's Park, or witnessed a riot. Such has always been the case, I suspect. But agitators make a better story.

But this is not an account of what happened to Berkeley. Here I wish only to sketch a setting for the Press when I first knew it, to give some idea—if only a personal and impressionistic one—of the environment in which it lived and grew. Berkeley was then more of a commuter town than it is now, one of the bedrooms of San Francisco. Trains to The City, as it was called, ran every few minutes along Shattuck Avenue, a block from the Press building, loaded with blue- and white-collar workers and with those who took the day off for shopping or pleasure. Editor Harold Small said that the riders, from early to late morning, were in turn the works, the clerks, and the shirks. The trains were more visible than they are now and a more vital part of the community.

I don't know how it came about that Berkeley was also a town of churches and theological schools; many of the latter were clustered around a hill just north of the campus, sometimes known as Divinity Hill. In early days the city had its own local form of prohibition. By the forties this was gone, but a state law made it illegal to sell alcohol within a mile of the University; for a drink one had to travel south on Telegraph Avenue or west on University. As a result, perhaps, there were then no truly good restaurants in Berkeley, no Gourmet Ghetto. For reasons more social than alcoholic the streets were safe. One could walk across the campus at night without fear. And housewives, including the little old ladies in tennis shoes, were not afraid to shop on Telegraph Avenue in stores that no longer exist.

The chief fact about Berkeley was, of course, the University, then generally respected in town although sometimes resented for taking property off the tax rolls. And lest nostalgia imply too mild a picture, we may remember that all is not harmony and good will inside a university. There may be partial protection from the commercial and political world—or at least there used to be—but strife is common within. Faculty and business officers do not see eye to eye. Power

struggles convulse departments. Young teachers fight for tenure, older ones wage intellectual battles, sometimes against each other. There was the noted professor of history who had gathered, as some do, his coterie of loyal followers. Every noon master and acolytes sat around a large table at the Faculty Club, set apart from the ordinary run of academics. This little gathering was described by another professor as a sham giant surrounded by real pygmies. Intolerance there was, but no one invaded a professor's office or shouted him down at meetings.

The great expansion of the University came after the war, but slower change was going on in the early and middle forties. At that time Berkeley was still the center, the heart, the focus of greatness. The Southern Branch had become UCLA and moved to Westwood in 1929 and was on its way to claiming equality. Davis was an agricultural college, Riverside merely the Citrus Experiment Station, La Jolla the Scripps Institution of Oceanography, and Santa Barbara, not yet moved to Goleta, was trying to live down its normal-school beginnings. The only medical school was in San Francisco. Even so it was a great and widespread university if not yet the multiversity of Clark Kerr.

And the University Press? For the first forty years it had been little more than an academic committee with a secretary, sometimes called a manager, and with offices passed around from one University building to another. In 1933 it was grafted on to the University printing office, and in 1940 the combined organization moved into Sam Farquhar's handsome new building on Oxford Street, precisely between the campus to the east and the main Shattuck Avenue business district to the west. There it was when I visited in about 1940 and when I came to work in 1944.

The location now seems important. Although we never participated in municipal or local business affairs, we were slightly and subtly away from the academic center. Suppliers could come to us without bumping into classroom traffic. When we ate at the Faculty Club or called on a professor, we were almost visitors; we belonged and