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# The Southwest Printer

Clark Kimball

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Carl  
Hertzog  
Lecture Series



The Southwest Printer  
by  
Clark Kimball





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The University of Texas at El Paso

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## The Carl Hertzog Lecture Series

The Hertzog Lectures, inaugurated on February 5, 1989, and presented annually in the month of his birth, honor the memory and life work of the "Printer at the Pass," J. Carl Hertzog (1902-1984).

A premiere typographer and book designer long before his association with the University of Texas at El Paso, Mr. Hertzog brought his international renown to the then Texas Western College in 1948 and launched Texas Western Press in 1952, serving as its director until his retirement in 1972.

Books bearing the distinctive Carl Hertzog colophon reached a standard of excellence that is unexcelled to this day.

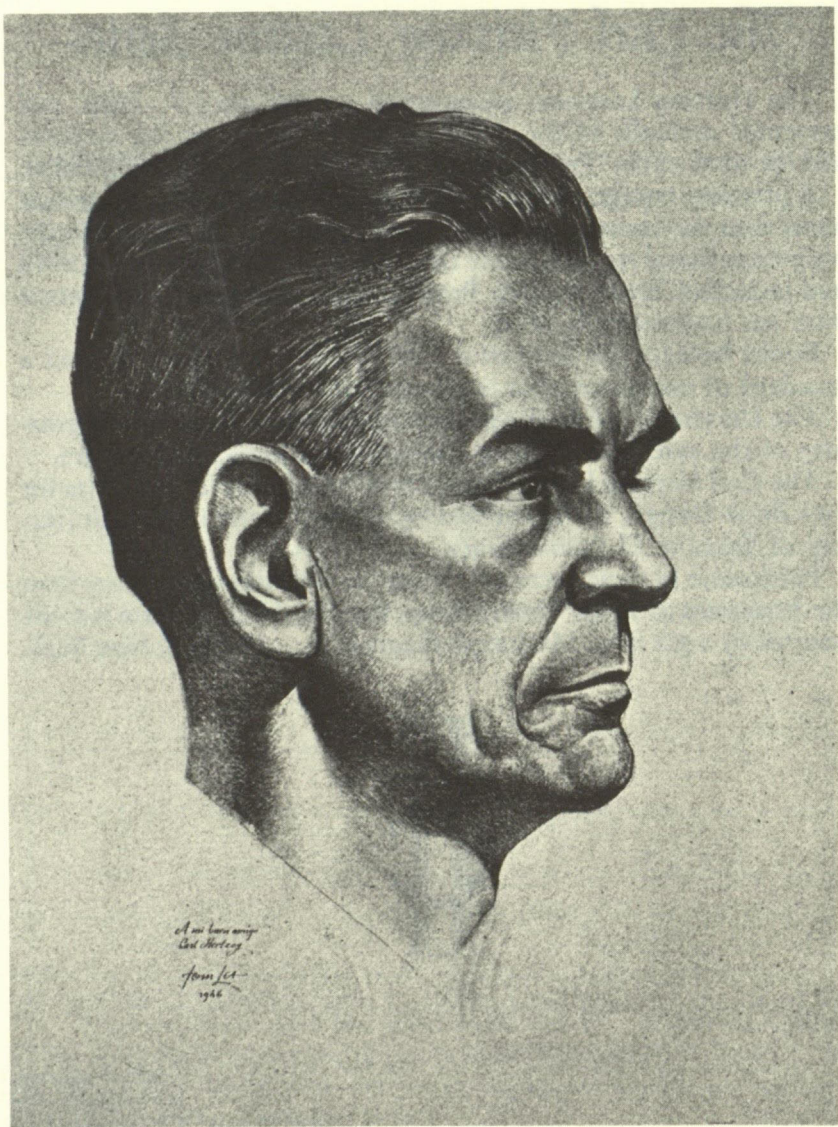
The University Library's Special Collections section is the repository of the extensive Hertzog Collection of books and papers.

The Carl Hertzog Lectures and the annual Carl Hertzog Prize for Fine Book Design, are sponsored by the Associates of The University of Texas at El Paso Library.

Publication of these Lectures is made possible through a grant from the Associates to Texas Western Press; the Carl Hertzog Prize is made possible by a gift from Mr. Joseph Goodell, Jr., of Buffalo, New York.







(Drawing by Tom Lea, 1946)

J. Carl Hertzog  
1902 — 1984

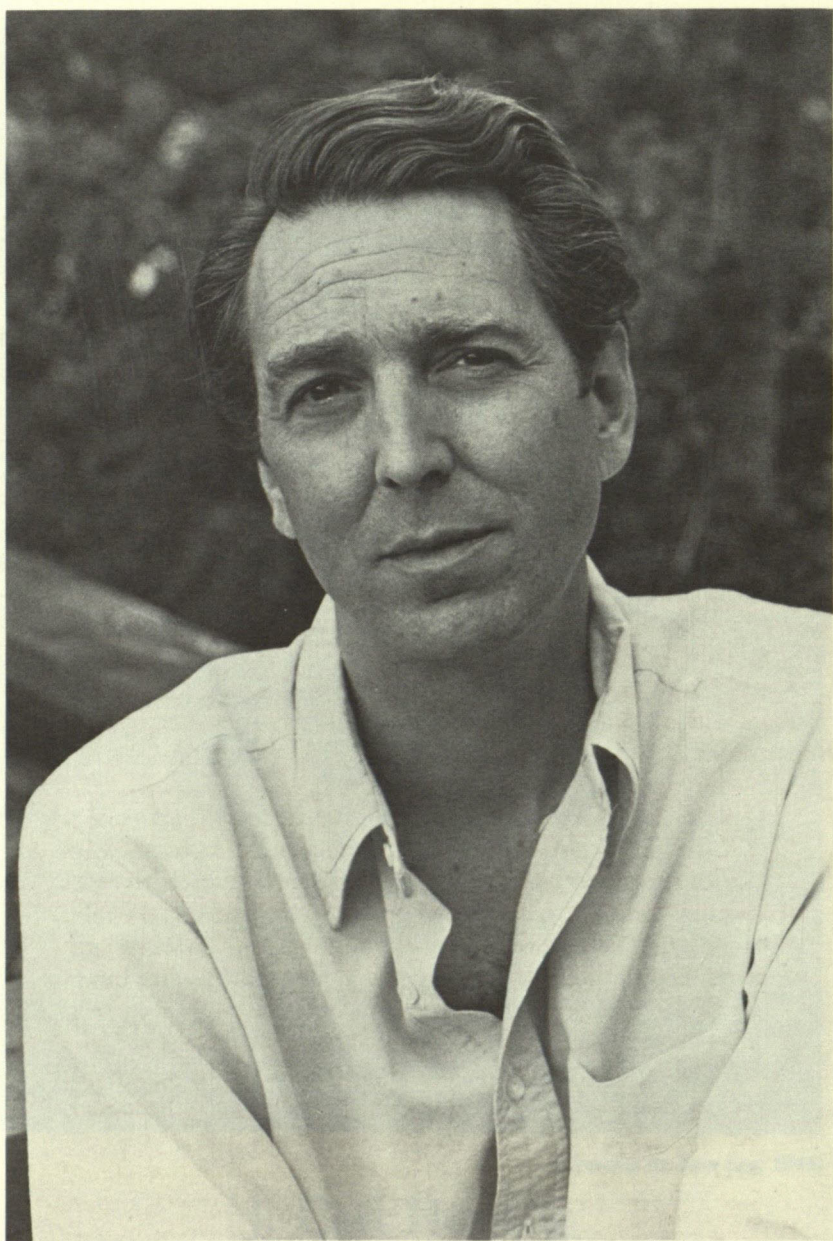
# **The Southwest Printer**

by  
**Clark Kimball**

February 4, 1990

Carl Hertzog Lecture Series, No. 2





Clark Kimball. (Photo by Cynthia Farah)

As you have noted, the title of the lecture is "The Southwest Printer." I selected this title as a tribute to Carl Hertzog. In the 1926 issue of the *Inland Printer* he made a plea for distinction in typography. Today's talk, however, should perhaps be called "The Southwest Typographer." For today I will make a plea for distinction in Southwest typography.

As I think of Southwest typography, what it has been, what it is, and what it can be — I first think, of course, of Southwest writing. Such names as Mary Austin, Paul Horgan, J. Frank Dobie, Tom Lea, Conrad Richter, Eugene Manlove Rhodes, Harvey Fergusson, John Graves, Stanley Vestal, and Larry McMurtry, among many others, come to mind.

As I think of these writers I am reminded of the historic debate over regionalism in the Southwest, and in particular, regional writing here versus other or mainstream writing across America. I want today to talk a little about that debate, in order to, as it were, back into the subject of Southwest typography, for I think that much that was said about regional writing is also relevant to regional typography.

Mabel Major and T.M. Pearce, in a 1948 book entitled *Southwest Heritage*, which is a bibliography of the regional literature, had this to say of regionalism:

Regionalism in the Southwest has been variously understood. B.A. Botkin, spokesman of the Oklahoma group during the heyday of the matter, defines it from four angles: *localistic* with roots in one place, *naturistic* with roots in the land and the folk, *traditional* with roots in personal heritage, and *cultural* with roots in inter-regional backgrounds. Such a view is broad enough to challenge a hearing and to inspire creative writers. Indeed, Mr. Botkin's *Folk-Say* (1929-1931) and *Space* (1934) did so. The trouble is that so comprehensive a creed permits of different interpretations and heresies not only among the infidels but among the believers. Therefore, as early as 1929, the *Southwest Review*, then edited by John H. McGinnis and Henry Smith, opened its pages to outstanding Southwestern writers for a Symposium on Regionalism. 'Do you think the Southwest landscape and common traditions,' the editors asked, 'can (or should) develop a culture recognizable as unique and as more



satisfying and profound than our present imported culture and art?' The responses, as published in the *Review*, sum up the whole problem. Need for contact with the land, the perils of over-standardization, the rich heritage of the past are stressed; but warnings are sounded against provincialism and sentimental romanticism.

So stands the case for regionalism in the Southwest as a specific literary movement. Undoubtedly it was sometimes much too glibly accepted as a final word, and as often it was ballyhoed; but it was and still is an important influence. Out of it continue to come good results. The discussion itself stirred intellectual activity and bred new critics and bold little magazines. It has stimulated creative writing in many fields, fostered regional presses, and encouraged bookshops.

Two of the distinguished writers who participated in the discussion were Mary Austin and J. Frank Dobie. Here's what Austin had to say in the *Southwest Review* in that same 1929 issue:

Conditions prevailing throughout the United States make it impossible to be very explicit in ascribing cultural capacity to any particular regional group. Americans in general have been much more interested in being cultivated than in creating cultures. That is to say they are more interested in possessing the assets of other cultures than in producing anything of their own. For example, to be musically cultured in America means to know the history of music and to be able to recognize and assign to their regional and historic places the best examples of it and to take pleasure in so doing. But to be a part of a musical culture would mean to have produced a kind of music which is not only expressive of life as it is being lived among us, but is at the time spiritually satisfying. And the only people among us who have done that are the Indians and the Negroes. People who study such things intimately say there are signs that, beginning with these two folk methods of music, we are gradually evolving a mode of musical expression which is recognizably American. Similarly, beginning with the architectural pattern developed among our Indian Pueblos, adding steel and adapting it to urban conditions, we are creating an American



architecture. In literature we are approaching forms that are natively expressive. By the time we have developed all these things to the point at which they are instinctive and complement one another in a genetic relation to American life, we will have an American culture.

But we would have all this much more quickly if, instead of attempting the general, we should confine our efforts to the particular, so adapting ourselves regionally that in the place where we live we would achieve a continuous process of living and expressing, neither of which could be mistaken for the living and expressing in other localities.

But traveling about our Southwest, one can not avoid the conclusion that such distinction has not yet been generally made. You can own a house in Los Angeles of any imaginable style of architecture except one native to the soil; you can purchase in Dallas beautiful objects from everywhere in the world but Dallas: only in Santa Fe, of our western cities, can you find things originating and still made in that town. When it comes to ideas, spiritual perceptions, types of social accommodations, I doubt if there is any discoverable difference in the four or five states that make up the Southwest, from any other five states.

What we come back to, in this discussion, is neither the landscape — by which I suppose is meant the whole geographical complex of crops, climate, and native scene — nor the tradition, which is fairly unified. We come back to the cultural tradition of the people, the disposition which would lead them to reject the easy satisfaction of human wants through the mail order catalogue, and to demand in housings and furnishings, in social accommodation and personal expression, something native both to themselves and to their land.

And here is J. Frank Dobie from the same issue of *Southwest Review* in his piece entitled "True Culture Is Eclectic, But Provincial":

Despite the fact that all great cultures of the world are informed by the humanities, any culture distinct enough to be recognizable possesses individuality. Attempts on the part of any group merely to imitate the culture of a distant age or people must result in something vapid, colorless, impotent.

The Southwest has inherited a turn of idiom, a history, a tradition of character, a flavor of the soil that are highly individual. The land itself — Staked Plains, mesquite thickets, prickly-pear flats, greasewood deserts, Brazos bottoms, Pecos brakes, Mogollon Mountains — is like no other land on earth.

If the educated leaders of the Southwest ignore all this and seek to build a culture imitative of the Age of Queen Anne or of Tennysonian idealism or of anything else that belongs to another time and soil, the result will be flat and futile. If the masses entirely forsake their heritage and become standardized by jazz, radios, chain stores, and gasoline, the result will be equally characterless. True culture is eclectic; it is also provincial in the way that Shakespeare and Goethe and Synge were provincial.

Whether the Southwest will develop a distinct culture I do not know. I only know that if a distinctly Southwestern culture is developed it will employ cattle brands and no signs of the zodiac to ornament the facades of its buildings; that its gardens will be made beautiful by native mountain laurel as well as by English boxwood; that it will paint with the colors of the painted Desert as well as with the colors of the Aegean; that its biographers will have to understand Sam Houston better than they understand John Quincy Adams; that its actors on the stage will cultivate the drawl of old-time Texans rather than the broad *a's* of Boston; and that the aroma of jasmines and bluebonnets, the golden gracility of the *retama*, the sting of a dry norther, the lonely howl of the coyote, and the pulsing silence of places where machines do not murder quietude — such things will appeal to the senses through the rhythms of its poets.

In his 1926 "Plea for Distinction," Carl Hertzog said, "Cannot we fellow craftsmen put over the idea that there is no such thing as poor typography? Let there be poor printing or rather typesetting if our art must be contaminated, but let not the word typography be attributed to anything except creditable and meritorious composition incorporated into fine printing. Let there be only one kind of typography — fine."

To these words I would like to add one from Mary Austin, the word "instinct" and one from Frank Dobie, the word "idiom." In my mind, Southwestern typography must be *creditable*, *meritorious*, *instinctive* and



*idiomatic*. Has this, however, been the case? If so, can it continue to be the case? Like fine regional writing which is at once specific yet also transcendent, Southwest typography, too, must be rooted in its own specific tradition, yet also evolutionary in its growth.

We remember the city of Mainz in Germany as the birthplace of Gutenberg's printing press, types and ink. (We also remember the city of El Paso as the place where Carl Hertzog lived and worked.) The great 42-line rubricated Bible was printed in Mainz by Gutenberg in 1455. It is said by some that despite the fact that this Bible was the first great printed book, it was nevertheless a perfect and flawless example of printing. (It can also be argued that books from the studio and press of Hertzog are perfect and flawless.)

Gutenberg's typographic masterpieces — his incunabula — sought to mimic the previous work of scribes. Simply put, the new thing, the book, was designed to look like a manuscript — to copy it. The technique and technology developed by Gutenberg soon expanded, with greater and lesser success, throughout Europe and to the Americas.

In 1490 Queen Isabella of Spain commissioned a dictionary in Spanish.

In 1539 (and remember this date, 1539) printing came from Spain to Mexico where Juan Pablos printed *Doctrina Cristiana en la Lengua Castellana*.

Printing reached England in 1474 with William Caxton's printing of *Recuyell of the Histories of Troye*. (Caxton was studied and greatly admired by Carl Hertzog.)

It was not until 1638 — one hundred years after printing had come to the Americas in Mexico City, south of here — that Stephen Daye printed *The Whole Booke of Psalms* in Massachusetts.

In the American West printing came first to Texas with Samuel Bang's 1817 printing of "Proclama del General Mina." New Mexico saw its first printing in 1832 with Padre Martinez's "Lista de los Ciudadanos. . ."

The same year, 1832 or 1833, saw the printing in California of the announcement of the arrival of the new governor, Don Jose Figueroa.

Oklahoma printed a children's book in the Creek Indian language in 1835. And Arizona and Colorado both printed newspapers — *The Arizonan* and *The Cherry Creek Pioneer* respectively in 1859.

Carl Hertzog was born in Lyon, France, on February 8, 1902. He would have been 88 years old this week. He came to El Paso as a printer for the W.S. McGrath Company in 1923. In 1937 he opened his own shop. He died here in 1984.



As I think of the 500-plus years of the taking root and growth of typography — of its creditability and meritoriousness, and of the recent example here in the American Southwest of Carl Hertzog, I am again reminded of the words “instinctive” and “idiomatic.” How is Southwest typography to be instinctive if the typographer has not gotten the landscape, its peoples and its cultures into his (or her) blood and heart? And would not such an inherent aptitude necessarily lead to an idiomatic response? Would not such books be “branded” as it were?

Is there truly, meritoriously and creditably, not regional writing . . . and regional typography? And is each not masterful of its art and craft, knowledgeable and derivative, to such an extent, that its instinct and idiom grow or evolve upward from the roots?

“Fame does not depend upon the majority,” says noted Southwest bibliographer Lawrence Clark Powell. “Great art is transmitted by the few to the few in each generation who know the permanent from the temporary. This is not snobbism; this is the way life is. As for printing, all that most people ask is that it be legible. That printing can also be art does not interest them. And yet, when printing is of such perfection as to be called art, then does it last as long as paper lasts?”

Carl Hertzog said, “Some printers will drive themselves up a wall seeking the satisfaction of meeting their own impossibly high standards. The fond hope is that they will strike a responsive chord in the hearts of a few people who are perceptive enough to receive a very subtle form of communication.”

What subtle form has Southwestern typography taken? Among many other books from Carl Hertzog, we have the examples, of course, of Tom Lea’s *The King Ranch* and *Peleliu Landing*; Sally Matthew’s *Interwoven*; Ross Calvin’s *River of the Sun*; John Graves’ *Goodbye to a River*; and Larry Powell’s own *A Southwest Century*. These are some of my favorites.

I will not try today to tell you why I find these books, among many, to be especially creditable, meritorious, instinctive and idiomatic. You will think about these words and examine these books and you will understand my meaning. Suffice it to say, as Bill Holman said in “A Hertzog Dozen,” “that in these typographies . . . there is harmony with the writer’s purpose . . . an appeal to the emotions . . . a reality of place and time.” Hertzog put it this way, “The design and materials, the typography, must be at the service of the subject matter.”

The paper, the ink, the letterforms — the Romans, the italics, the serifs and san serifs — the ligatures, impression, spacing, leading, margin, gutter;

the plates, illustrations, frontispieces, head and tail pieces; colophons; borders, rules, folios, ding-bats; title pages, half-titles; cloths, papers, boards; stampings, debossings, labels, bands, cases — these are some of the words of the typographer — challenging and magical words — each latent and potent with meaning — each of which must be put at the service of the subject matter, and simultaneously in harmony with each other!

The technique and technology of printing, like the very Southwest, itself, its people and cultures, has changed and will continue to change in dramatic and frustrating ways. There is no reason why the Southwestern writer and Southwest typographer cannot keep apace of such change while maintaining and reflecting deep-rooted, historic values. I believe that this is the case, and can continue to be so. I believe in the distinction of Southwest typography.

I'd like to close these remarks today with Paul Horgan's words from "About the Southwest," which appeared in the 1933 issue of the *Southwest Review*.

For it is the land which is still supreme in Nueva Granada. From its rusty earth must grow the grasses for the range on which the red cows rove, when winter withdraws before the southern breath of spring, when the young rains come sweeping across the plains from the Gulf, up over the yellow fields of Oklahoma into the scrubby pine hills and leonine mountains of New Mexico, and westward to the deserts of Arizona where the scarlet and the white flowers, monster-glorious, shout and blossom under the sun. It is the cattle, feeding on the nourished ground, that still establish the economics of the regions, if no longer the legendary character of it. And any people that must depend so directly on the rain to bring food is still subservient to the land and its tempers and its conditions. The Southwest still exists upon realities, instead of symbols of realities like urban systems of commerce and finance and machines. It exists upon realities because the land is so tremendous, so bare of human life in so many million acres, because there are so many plains rising sharply to mountainhood, so much communion between sky and earth with great slow-sailing clouds and stars that watch the night like near eyes, because to go from one place to another it is necessary so very often to drive in cars along lonely roads with nothing in sight but the gently lifting and



falling horizons of low hills; because the conditions of natural life raise no clamor like that sustained daily by tiring nerves in other regions; because, no matter what the manner of people, they must be moved by the beauty of Texas plains and Oklahoma wheat fields and New Mexico mountains and Arizona deserts alike; and because, though the survivals are only travesties to be noticed amidst the developments of our time, the color of past splendors of race and deed is mixed with the land by the agency of our imaginations; and we pay it tribute, as it nourishes us.



## Clark Kimball

Born in Ithaca, New York, Clark Kimball's far-ranging career has included work as bookseller, literary agent, and publisher.

In 1970 he received a bachelor's degree in English and Spanish Literature from Cornell University, and the following year was awarded a master of fine arts degree in writing from the University of North Carolina. He received a second master's degree, from Columbia University, in 1975, in rare book librarianship.

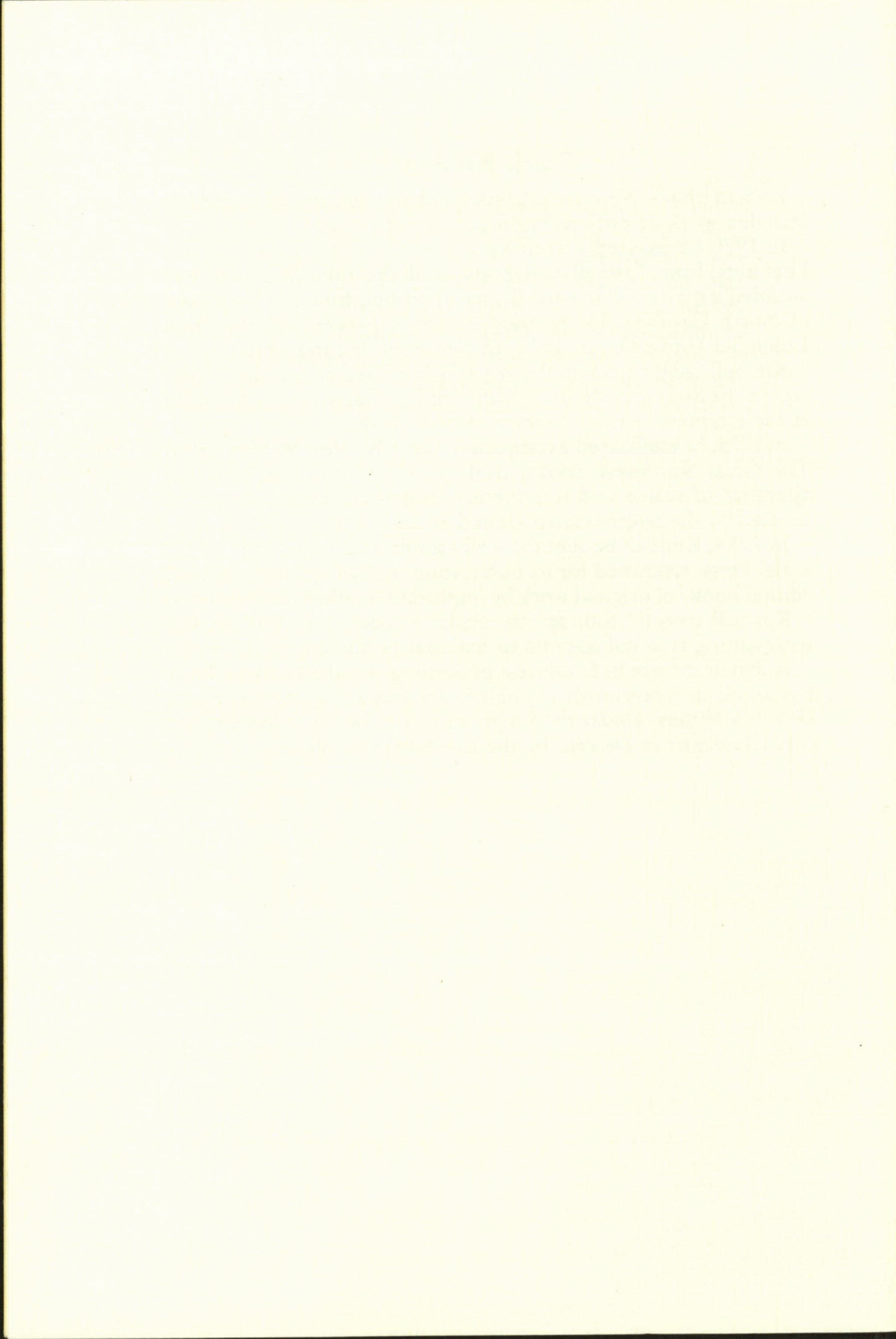
Kimball taught typography at Cornell, served as a gallery assistant at the Swann Galleries in New York and as assistant librarian at the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York.

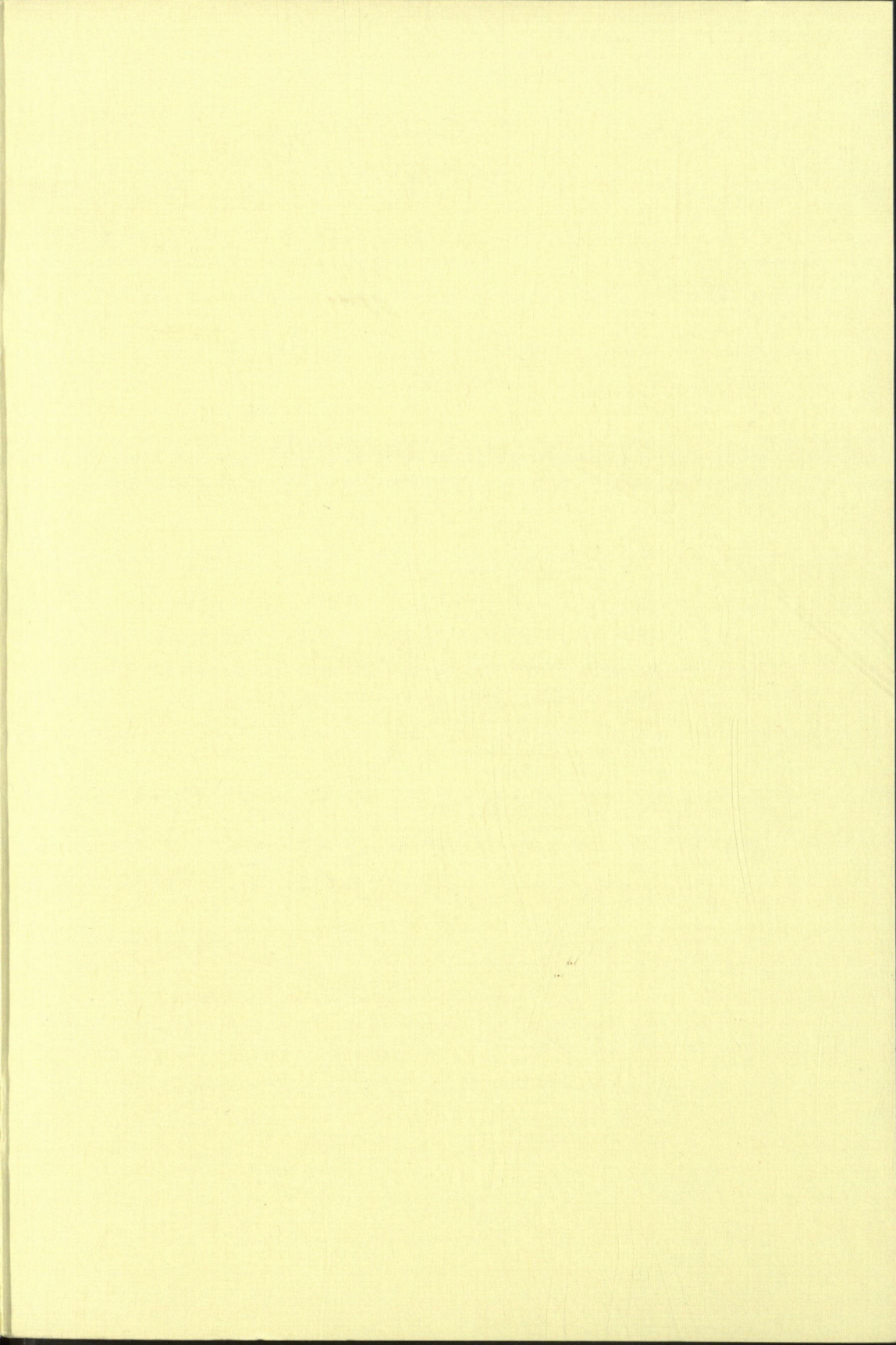
In 1975, he established a company in Santa Fe, New Mexico, called The Great Southwest Books, dealing in the sale, purchase and appraisal of scarce and rare literary properties, especially works devoted to the Southwestern United States.

In 1984, Kimball bought the well-established (founded in 1932) Rydal Press, renowned for its publication of finely printed, limited edition books of original work by important Southwestern authors.

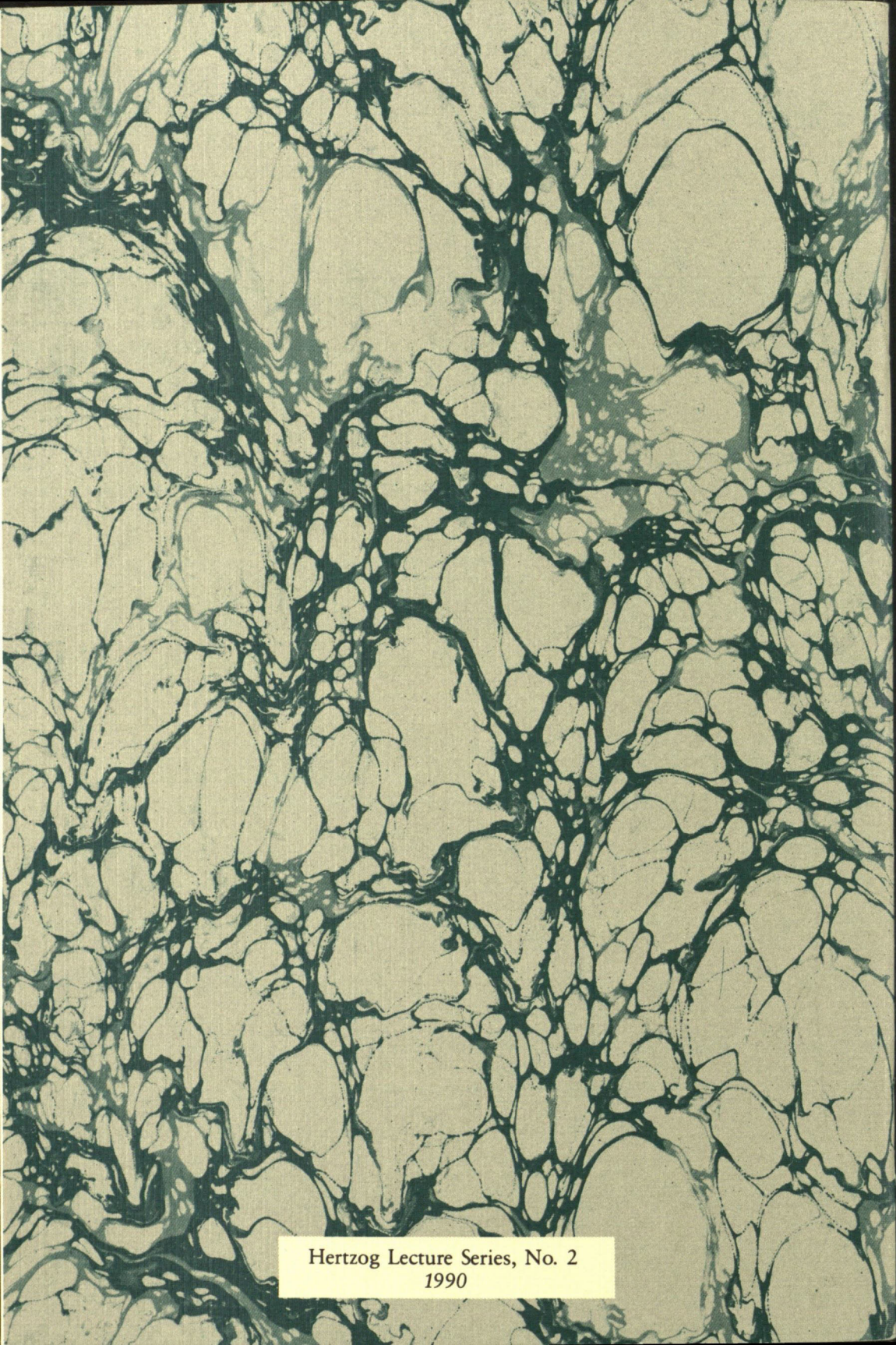
Kimball recently founded the Rydal Agency, a literary agency representing regional authors to national publishers.

A dynamic force in Southwest publishing, Kimball's Rydal Press has issued such previously unpublished works as *Flight From Fiesta* by Frank Waters, *Under the Sangre de Cristo* by Paul Horgan, and *Vox Clamantis in Deserto* by the late Edward Abbey.









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