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The Charles Potts Collection: Cataloging a Cultural Movement

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Charles Potts

Counter-culture poet, activist, entrepreneur and publisher, Charles Potts donated his personal poetry library and papers to Utah State University’s Special Collections and Archives in 2011. During his time at Berkeley, Potts describes himself as a ‘revolutionary hippie’ in the counter-culture poetry scene. Overall, this great American poet has spent nearly 50 years as an author of numerous books containing compilations of his post-modern poetry as well as full length novels and even a screenplay.

Potts was born in Idaho Falls, Idaho, in 1943 and grew up raising Applehouse horses on a ranch in Mackay. After reading F. scott Fitzgerald, Potts wanted to be a poet but later, while attending Idaho State University, was convinced to be a poet by his mentor Ed Dorn. Taking the advice to heart, Potts as a poet began in 1963 when his first poem was published in the periodical Wild Dog.


After reading Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Potts wanted to be an author, but later, while attending Idaho State University, was convinced to be a poet by his mentor Ed Dorn. Taking the advice to heart, Potts as a poet began in 1963 when his first poem was published in the periodical Wild Dog.

In the late 1960s, Potts started Tsunami Inc. which is known for publishing The Temple, Gu Si, El Templo, a quarterly published by a group of poets in Berkeley, where he also spent considerable time. The Temple Bookstore closed in 2002. Finally, the bookstore hosted the Temple School of Poetry. The Temple Bookstore closed in 2002.

Potts was a renowned counterculture poet in Berkeley until he was hospitalized for psychosis in 1968. In the 1970s while in Salt Lake City, he re-established himself as a poet and essayist as well as published many of his early writings including his two-part novella Volga River. After moving to Walla Walla, Washington, he worked in real estate to ensure his family’s financial security. He renewed contact with the Idaho West of his youth related in important books of poetry in the 1990s, and his work developed further following his study of Japanese and Mandarin Chinese in that decade. His books include Little Lord Shiva (1968); Volga River (1977); Rocky Mountain Man (1978); How the South Finally Won the Civil War (1985); Lost River Mountain (1989); Across the North Pacific (2001) and Else (2003).

He also founded the Temple Bookstores, located literally in an old masonic temple in Walla Walla, Washington, where he also sponsored and took part in organizing and producing Walla Walla Poetry Festivals, which started in 1986. In addition to the Poetry Festivals, the bookseller had regular poetry readings up to twice a week. Finally, the bookseller hosted the Temple School of Poetry. The Temple Bookstores closed in 2002.

In the late 1980s, Potts started Tsunami Inc. which is known for publishing The Temple, Gu Si, El Templo, a quarterly publishing poetry, containing poetry translated from Chinese and Spanish. Potts was also the president and founder of Palouse Management Inc., a real estate company where he worked as a broker.

Potts was also a significant supporter of the Avant Garde Poetry Movement in Berkeley, California, where he was deeply involved in the Beat and left-wing poetry movements of the 1950s and 1960s. He was a member of the San Francisco Poetry Group and the Western Literature Association, and he was also a founder and editor of the literary magazine The Temple. Potts was known for his political activism and his support for the anti-war movement.

His books include Little Lord Shiva (1968); Volga River (1977); Rocky Mountain Man (1978); How the South Finally Won the Civil War (1985); Lost River Mountain (1989); Across the North Pacific (2001) and Else (2003). He also wrote poetry and essays, and his work was published in numerous literary journals and collections.

Potts' describes himself as a counter-culture poet, activist, entrepreneur, and publisher. He has spent nearly 50 years as an author of numerous books containing compilations of his post-modern poetry as well as full length novels and even a screenplay.

Potts has written poetry, essays, and novels, and has been involved in various literary and activist movements throughout his career. He has been a significant supporter of the Avant Garde Poetry Movement in Berkeley, California, and his work has been published in numerous literary journals and collections.

Cataloging the Collection

- **Nature of Collection:** Short books of poetry, Vanity publishers with special binding paper, Inscriptions and/or signatures, Wide variety of publications in informal formats & collated in unique ways, Some non-book items: flash cards, woodcuts, etc.

- **Workflow:**
  1. **Student worker’s process collection**
     a) assign call numbers
     b) label, folder & box
     c) search Sierra (ILS) for existing record
  2. **Record found— add new holdings and notes**
     a) no record— enter on file cataloging
  3. **Cataloged by UH-Libraries Cataloging and Metadata Services Department staff**
     a) Record found— add new holdings and notes
     b) no record— enter on file cataloging

- **Tracking**
  - Finding the physical location of books and ensuring they are properly cataloged
  - Organizing the cataloging process effectively

- **Highlights**
  - **Cataloged in OCLC**
  - Unique material as such as Publisher Proofs
  - Added Information in Cataloging Rarities
  - Notes for special aspects, limited editions, etc.
  - Local notes for inscriptions, signatures, etc.
  - Numbering
  - Poetry gyfts & Publisher handouts