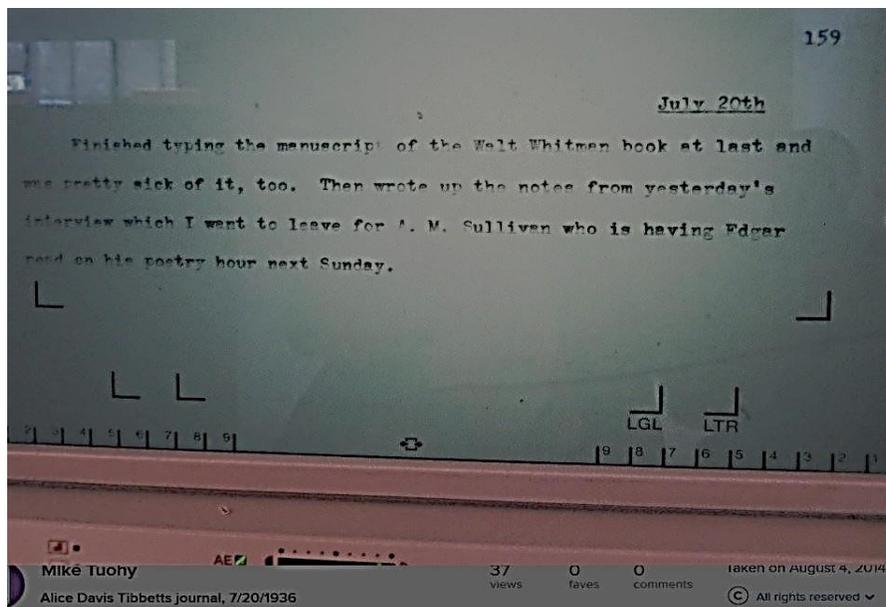


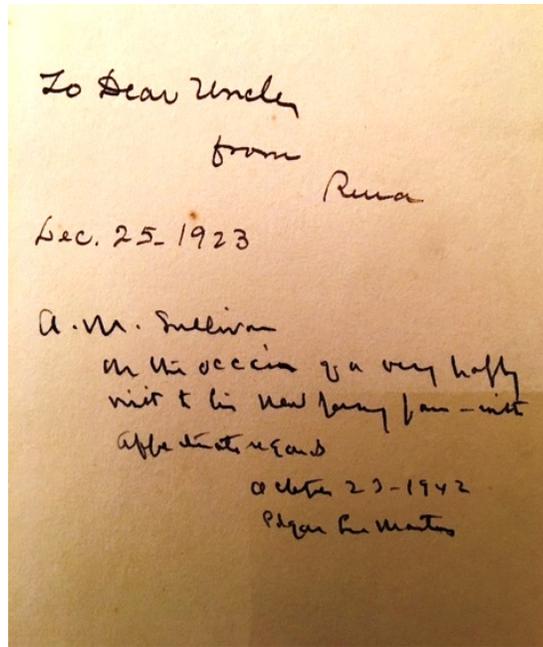
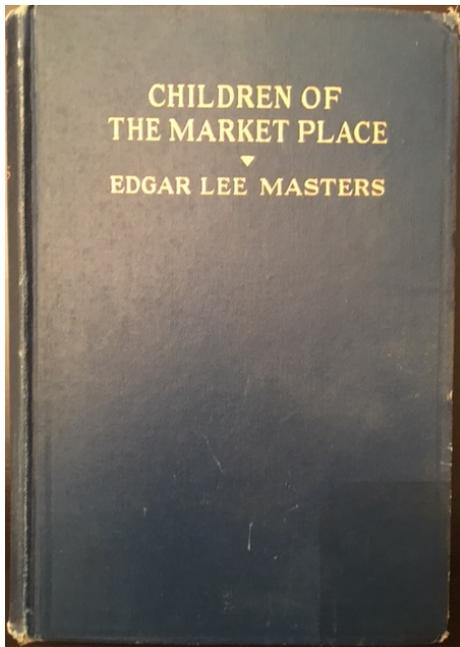
A.M. Sullivan and Edgar Lee Masters

As president of the Poetry Society of America and conductor of the New Poetry Hour on the Mutual Radio Network in the 1930s and 1940s, A.M. Sullivan became well acquainted with a number of accomplished poets and writers of the day. One of these was Edgar Lee Masters, author of the groundbreaking *Spoon River Anthology*, published in 1912. Masters was famously cantankerous but somehow Sullivan was able to forge a friendship that lasted for many years. According to Masters' biographer, Herbert K. Russell, Sullivan, with the aid of arts patron Gertrude Claytor, managed to convince Masters that he should accept the Poetry Society's prestigious Frost Medal as well as attend and address the Society on the occasion in 1941. Masters declined the invitation the year before. Masters appeared on Sullivan's radio program on at least three occasions. According to the unpublished journal of Masters' girlfriend, Alice Davis Tibbetts, *Evenings With Edgar*, Sullivan visited the couple while they resided at the Chelsea Hotel in Manhattan in the 1930s and 1940s.



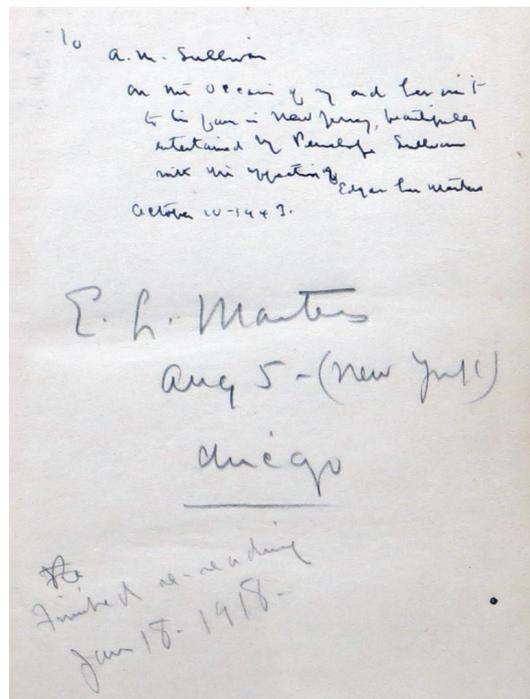
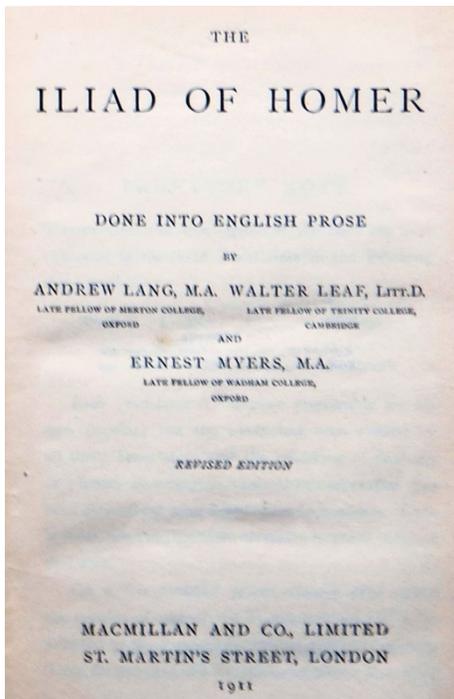
Excerpt from Alice Davis Tibbetts' journal "Evenings With Edgar" dated 7/20/1936:
"Finished typing the manuscript of the Walt Whitman book at last and was pretty sick of it too. Then wrote up the notes from yesterday's interview which I want to leave for A.M. Sullivan who is having Edgar read on his poetry hour next Sunday."

Sullivan maintained contact with Tibbetts long after Masters' death in 1950. This is documented in Tibbetts' book collection which now resides in the Princeton University library. The collection includes 12 of Sullivan's books with inscriptions, some of which reference a visit by Masters and Tibbetts to Sullivan's home on the Musconetcong River in New Jersey as well as Sullivan's visits with the couple at the Chelsea Hotel in New York City. This is also documented in two books given by Masters to Sullivan in 1942, and 1947, with inscriptions. The first is a copy of Masters' book *Children of the Marketplace* and the second Masters' personal copy of *The Iliad*.



“To A.M Sullivan on the occasion of a very happy visit to his New Jersey farm with affectionate regards, October 23, 1942, Edgar Lee Masters”

The inscription above it is a mystery. It appears someone (Rena?) gave this copy to her dear uncle. It’s possible that A.M. Sullivan had this in his possession when Masters visited and had him inscribe it, so, maybe he was the “Dear Uncle”.



“On the occasion of my and her visit to the farm in New Jersey, beautifully entertained by President Sullivan with his affection - Edgar Lee Masters” October 14, 1947”

The “her” refers to Alice Davis Tibbetts. The title “President” refers to A.M. Sullivan’s position as president of the Poetry Society of America. A penciled note mentions re-reading in 1918.

Children of the Marketplace was a fictional biography of Stephen A. Douglas. Masters accused Carl Sandberg of “stealing” from the book when he wrote his biography of Lincoln.

The significance of this copy of *The Iliad* is in part its connection to *The Spoon River Anthology*, Masters’ most famous and enduring work which contained a section titled “The Spooniad”, a long poem modeled after Alexander Pope’s satirical work, *The Dunciad*. *The Dunciad* was basically a parody in form of Virgil’s epic Latin poem *The Aeneid*, Aeneas was a character in Homer’s *The Iliad*. Masters professed a particular fondness for Homer and claimed to read his work every spring, though he admitted taking time away from this practice while working on *Spoon River*, which was first published in 1915. A notation in the copy he gave to A.M. Sullivan in 1947 indicates that he re-read the work in 1918. That he gave this copy to Sullivan suggests how much regard he felt for him.

Photographs of Masters and Sullivan together are in the Alice Davis Tibbetts archive in the Princeton Library. I hope to get copies to include here. This is the reference:

<http://findingaids.princeton.edu/collections/C1198/c008>

The list of Tibbetts’ books with inscriptions in her collection can be seen here:

http://libweb2.princeton.edu/rbse2/misc/Bib_4193655.pdf

Masters’ appearances on Sullivan’s radio program, *The New Poetry Hour*, are documented in a list of programs and guests in the A.M. Sullivan archives at Syracuse University. Masters appeared three times, July 26, 1936; September 27, 1936 and February 13, 1938. The list appears here:

http://library.syr.edu/digital/guides/s/sullivan_am.htm7

An inventory of this collection appears here:

http://library.syr.edu/digital/guides/s/sullivan_am.htm#restrictlink