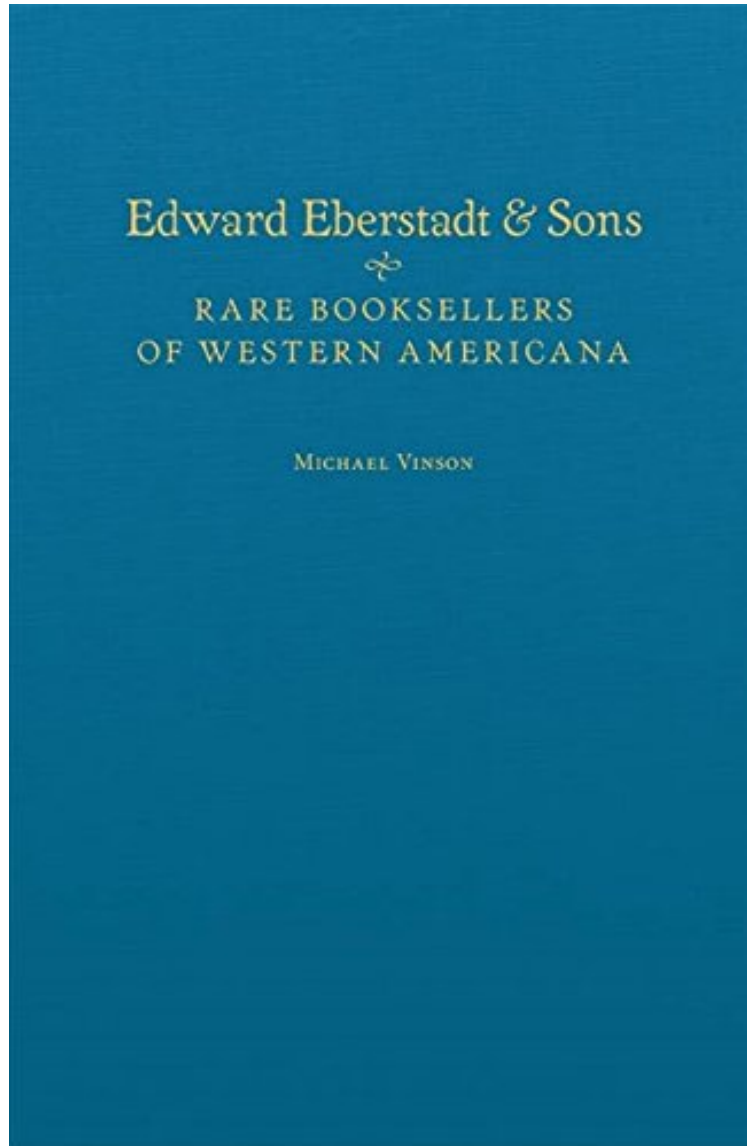


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Edward Eberstadt Sons: Rare Booksellers of Western Americana

Michael Vinson

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Michael Vinson : Edward Eberstadt Sons: Rare Booksellers of Western Americana before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Edward Eberstadt Sons: Rare Booksellers of Western Americana:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A Very Worthwhile Inside Look Into Rare BooksellingBy IntrepidbooksProvides a fascinating window into the rare bookselling world during the gilded age through to the nineteen eighties. The Eberstadt's cultivated a customer base of legendary book collector/billionaire's of the era, including Thomas Streeter, Harvard Law school 1907 graduate (retired Treasurer-VP AIG, and Morristown, NJ

resident; William Robinson Coe (Johnson Higgins Insurance Co. and through marriage Standard Oil), of Oyster Bay, NY/Cody, WY/Palm Beach FL as well as many institutional clients. Well researched through numerous archival sources of the correspondence it provides interesting gossip and tidbits of information, some with parallels to the rare book business today. Highly recommended. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Fascinating Story By Senior Citizen Reader I am so glad I took the time to read this book, Edward Eberstadt Sons: Rare Booksellers of Western Americana by Michael Vinson. First of all, the physical book itself is beautifully designed, printed, and bound. Especially appropriate is the archival quality of the paper on which it is printed, which is of great importance to all book collectors. Beyond the physical characteristics of the book, the words themselves were a pleasure to read. The author's passion for and knowledge of book collecting comes through on every page as he tells the story of one of the greatest and most influential book dealers in the twentieth century, Edward Eberstadt and his two sons, Lindley and Charles. This may sound like a dry subject, but the story is much more than a chronology of historical facts (though those are presented in a well-documented scholarly fashion). Using many letters and notes written by and to Edward Eberstadt and his sons, Michael Vinson paints a detailed character portrait of a passionate, compassionate, and humorous bookseller, who not only loved (and collected for himself) all forms of printed Americana, but who also built long-term friendships with many of his customers and with other dealers. I often found myself laughing out loud as I read Edward's clever bantering to customers and friends (often the same) through his letters. The story also reveals the competitive, but friendly, nature of the book trade through a combination of quotations from original contemporary sources and a prose narrative that is both accessible and engaging for the reader. Though the story is principally about Edward, there is also much about his sons, who carried on the business as their father's health declined and after his death. I would recommend this book to anyone with an interest in books, whether a novice reader and researcher (like myself) or a professional writer, historian, or collector. There is much to be learned from studying the past experience of key players in any industry. Beyond that, this is also a good story well told. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Not light reading but surprising intrigue and intimacy. By R Tyson Spending a crazy amount of time in used book stores, special collections university archives and even accessioning old, if not rare, books acquired by our museum did not prepare me for this exciting journey into the back story of the rare book collecting business. Vinson shares the business adventures of Edward Eberstadt and his sons and their importance in western Americana through the extensive use of surviving personal letters and other materials. This creates surprising intrigue and intimacy. I also felt the nostalgic contrast of our digital age and this one where even notes across the top of receipts were important. Much has been lost through the lack of manuscript correspondence. I was particularly enlightened by the significance of sale and auction catalogues and their use to researchers. One collector referenced, "I like Eberstadt's catalogues better than anything I've found... I have learned more about books from them than from any bibliographies." I had not previously considered catalogues as an important research resource. This subject was thoroughly researched with extensive helpful footnotes and vital historical context. This is not light reading but engaging and illuminating. I'm sharing with my colleagues. They are in for a treat!

An unlikely bookseller in New York City became the leading dealer in rare Western Americana for most of the twentieth century. After working in western-U.S. and South American gold mines at the turn of the twentieth century, Edward Eberstadt (1883–1958) returned to his home in New York City in 1907. Through luck and happenstance, he purchased an old book for fifty cents that turned out to be a rare sixteenth-century Mexican imprint. From this bit of serendipity, Eberstadt quickly became one of the leading western Americana rare book dealers. In this book Michael Vinson tells the story of how Edward Eberstadt Sons developed its legendary book collection, which formed the backbone of many of today's top western Americana archives. Although the firm's business records have not survived, Edward and his sons, Charles and Lindley, were all prodigious letter writers, and nearly every collector kept his or her correspondence. Drawing upon these letters and on his own extensive experience in the rare book trade, Vinson gives the reader a vivid sense of how the commerce in rare books and manuscripts unfolded during the era of the Eberstadts, particularly in the relationships between dealers and customers. He explores the backstory that scholars of art history and museology have pursued in recent decades: the assembling of cultural treasures, their organization for use, and the establishment of institutions to support that use. His work describes the important role this key bookselling firm played in the western Americana trade from the early 1900s to Eberstadt Sons' dissolution in 1975. From Yale University and the American Antiquarian Society to the Newberry Library and the Huntington Library, the firm of Edward Eberstadt Sons has left its mark in western Americana repositories across the nation. Told here for the first time, the Eberstadt story reveals how one family's business and legacy have shaped the study of the American West.

"In this day and age of digitization and social networking, it is refreshing to read Vinson's well-told narrative documenting this legendary firm.... As Vinson humorously points out, booksellers and their customers thrive on gossip and love to exchange stories about how one dealer beat out another at an auction or to hear about how a new collector who dared enter their field of interest.... In summary, Michael Vinson's fast paced book is a must for anyone interested

in *Western American* and it stands as the best book-length chronicle of antiquarian bookselling this reviewer has ever read." Gary Kurutz (Curator Emeritus, California State Library) in *The Book Club of California Quarterly* (January, 2017), pp. 20-23. "If books about booksellers are to you as catnip to a feline, well, scratch my ears and collar me up, for Michael Vinson's *Edward Eberstadt Sons* is an enjoyable addition to this addictive genre." William Butts, *Manuscripts* Vol. 68, No. 4, (Fall, 2016), p. 335

About the Author Michael Vinson is a western Americana rare book dealer and a former curator in the western Americana collection of Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas. He is the author of *Motoring Tourists* and *the Scenic West*, which was selected as one of the Best Fifty Books by the Rounce and Coffin Club.