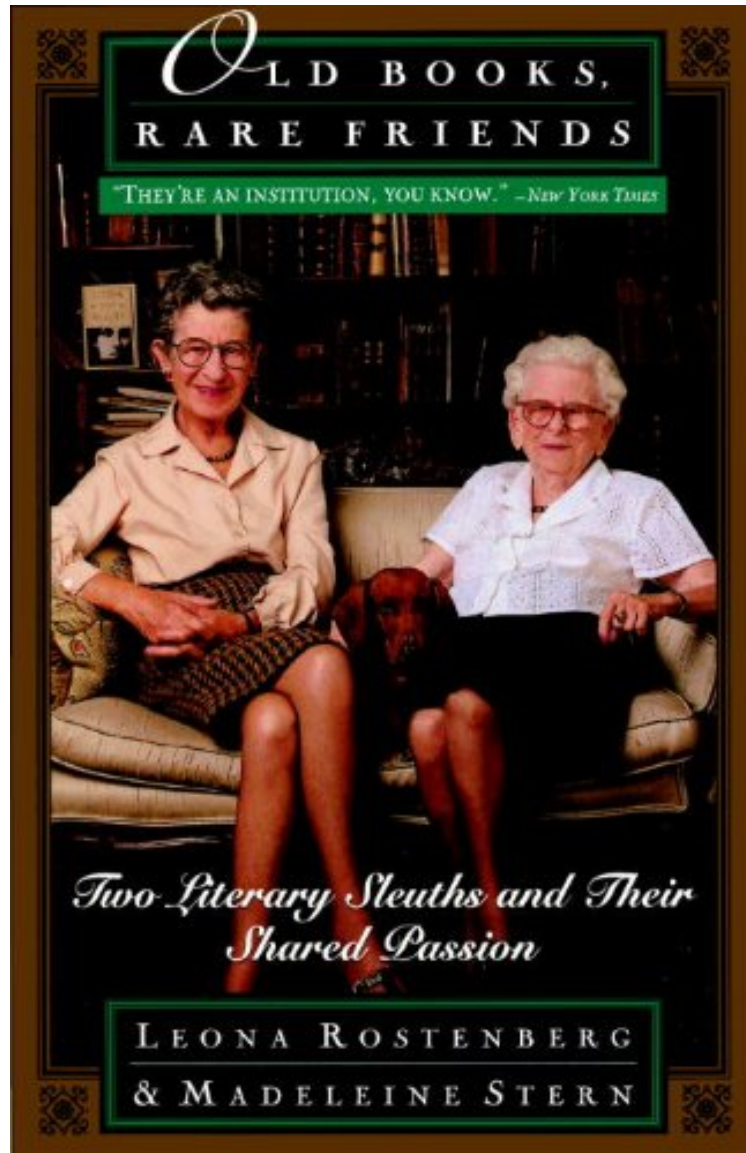


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Old Books, Rare Friends: Two Literary Sleuths and Their Shared Passion

Madeline B. Stern, Leona Rostenberg

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2012-05-30 2012-05-30 File Name: B003F3PKEK | File size: 39.Mb

Madeline B. Stern, Leona Rostenberg : Old Books, Rare Friends: Two Literary Sleuths and Their Shared Passion before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Old Books, Rare Friends: Two Literary Sleuths and Their Shared Passion:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A Rich LegacyBy Coneflower BooksAs a bookseller, and a lover of books, I enjoyed sharing the stories of Leona and Madeleine, and only wish I had been able to meet them. They were

both brilliant women who carved a niche for themselves in the world of books and book publishing for over fifty years. I like to imagine a conversation I would have begun with them, plying them with all my questions, and begging to accompany them on their next book adventure search. Their life experiences were rich, rewarding and exciting. Their unique relationship created a synergy that propelled each woman to reach new achievements in rare book collecting and in authorship. After I finished the book, I knew this was only an introduction for me, and that now I want to track down some of their other books and delve more deeply into their discoveries. I was saddened to learn that both women have now passed. We are all richer for the extensive research legacy they left behind for us to enjoy. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Buy both books By Joanne Jerrell I love books and I love lasting friendships, this is both -- buy both books. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A treasure you won't want to put down By MPaiva This book was recommended to me by a friend. At first, I read a chapter and put it down; though it was interesting, I was quite busy on other books, work and life in general. When I finally picked it up again, a couple of months later, I set aside time, prioritizing, this book. I hardly had to prioritize though, as it ended up being a full day, 8+ hours of immersion while on my back patio. The book takes you through two women with different lives and yet similar passions for knowledge, history and culture, and shares the progression of them weaving their background and present into their future. Their positive attitude is present in spite of challenges, which I believe is what brings them from existing in life to complete living in life. A treasure that you won't want to put down, you may feel compelled to ration yourself a chapter or pages a day to not feel the let down at the end of the book; however, you may find yourself in spite, devouring it in a day as I did. Rest assured, I am purchasing this book for all of my closest friends as the story is not only illuminating but inspiring as well. You feel their passions; how often does that happen in any of life? You are doing yourself a disservice to not drink this memoir ala' couple in...

Louisa May Alcott once wrote that she had taken her pen for a bridegroom. Leona Rostenberg and Madeleine Stern, friends and business partners for fifty years, have in many ways taken up their pens and passion for literature much in the same way. The "Holmes Watson" of the rare book business, Rostenberg and Stern are renowned for unlocking the hidden secret of Louisa May Alcott's life when they discovered her pseudonym, A.M. Barnard, along with her anonymously published "blood and thunder" stories on subjects like transvestitism, hashish smoking, and feminism. *Old Books, Rare Friends* describes their mutual passion for books and literary sleuthing as they take us on their earliest European book buying jaunts. Using what they call Finger-spitzengefuuml;hl, the art of evaluating antiquarian books by handling, experience, and instinct, we are treated to some of their greatest discoveries amid the mildewed basements of London's booksellers after the Blitz. We experience the thrill of finding one of the earliest known books printed in America between 1617-1619 by the Pilgrim Press and learn about the influential role of publisher-printers from the fifteenth century. Like a precious gem, *Old Books, Rare Friends* is a book to treasure about the companionship of two rare friends and their shared passion for old books.

.com Like 84, Charing Cross Road, Leona Rostenberg and Madeleine Stern's charming bibliocentric memoir is as much about relationships as it is about books. Charing Cross chronicled the decades-long epistolary friendship between American book lover Helene Hanff and Frank Doel, the equally devoted British bookseller in the London shop from whom she bought many of her treasures. Rostenberg and Stern's book once again proves how a passion for great literature can make for fast friends. And in their case, these two octogenarians occupy the same geographical space, sharing both their professional and private lives. In their introduction, Rostenberg and Stern write: "Several readers inferred ... that our relationship was a Lesbian one. This was a misconception. The 'deep, deep love' that existed and exists between us ... has no bearing upon sex." With that out of the way early on, the two recount the stories of their lives in alternating sections. And oh, what lives they've had! From identifying some of Louisa May Alcott's previously anonymous early writings to traveling the world in search of rare volumes and pamphlets, they have done and seen it all. Successful antiquarian book dealers Rostenberg and Stern undoubtedly are, but as this memoir makes clear, their greatest accomplishment just might be that rarer commodity of friendship that lasts a lifetime. --Alix Wilber From Booklist This small volume is so rich in anecdote, so warm with a loving friendship of many decades, so precise in its evocative descriptions of the rare-book trade from the 1930s to the present, that it is hard to imagine any reader who would not find pleasure in it. Leona Rostenberg and Madeleine Stern, who are the firm of Leona Rostenberg Rare Books, are now in their 80s, but their elegant writing and limpid descriptions of growing up in Manhattan and the Bronx, studying at Barnard, NYU, and Columbia, and touring Europe as young women show no signs of age. It is to Stern's scholarship that we owe the current rage for the non^-Little Women writings of Louisa May Alcott; it is to Rostenberg that we owe the notion that early printer-publishers influenced scholarship. Her adviser at Columbia had rejected her dissertation upon that topic: she was only granted her degree 30 years later. Their individual voices make both harmony and counterpoint in this joint autobiography; we are wiser and more blessed for the words and journeys they have shared. GraceAnne A. DeCandido From Kirkus s This breezy dual autobiography of two writers and antiquarian- book dealers points up their extraordinary accomplishment in spheres of endeavor long dominated by men. Octogenarian New Yorkers Rostenberg, a historian of early printers and

commentator on bibliographical subjects, and Stern, biographer and unmasker of Louisa May Alcott as the unknown writer of "blood-and-thunder" thrillers, have been friends since they were students at Columbia University and Barnard College, respectively. In alternating chapters the two detail their early lives, educations, and experiences as innocents abroad, but their story doesn't really heat up until the young Stern, with the economic freedom of a Guggenheim Foundation grant, begins working with clues from *Little Women* and other sources, as well as some key help from her friend Leona, to lay out the record of Alcott's "deviational narratives," written pseudonymously for the pulp magazines of her day. For Rostenberg, with her academic background in 15th-century books, or incunabula, professional appreciation of vellum, morocco, and calfskin was a natural path. Descriptions of their publications and the growth of their joint business are coupled with firsthand accounts of rare book and pamphlet discoveries abroad and sales to US libraries and academic institutions. Highlights include the sale in the 1960s of several en bloc collections, such as that of the inimitable 16th-century imprint the Aldine Press, Venice, and a marvelous subject collection on Florence with more than 300 works, including Medici family histories, papal bulls, and an illustrated first edition Vasari Lives of the Artists (both collections went to the University of Texas). Of interest for the Alcott material alone, but the light-handed, nontechnical accounts of the uncommon duo's experiences as women antiquarians also make pleasurable reading for anyone immersed in the world of books. (16 pages bw photos, not seen) -- Copyright copy;1997, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.