

Burt, (Maxwell) Struthers ^[1]



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by Richard Walser, 1979

18 Oct. 1881–28 Aug. 1954

(Maxwell) Struthers Burt, writer, was born in Baltimore of Irish and Welsh ancestry. His parents were from Philadelphia, where he grew up and attended private schools. For two years he was a reporter for the *Philadelphia Times*; then he entered Princeton University, being graduated in 1904. After attending the University of Munich and Oxford University, he taught English at Princeton.

Captivated by the West, Burt settled in Jackson Hole, Wyo., in 1908. On 8 Feb. 1913 he married a writer, later known as Katharine Newlin Burt, and began homesteading in Wyoming; two children were born to them there, Nathaniel, who also became a writer, and Julia Bleecher (Mrs. George C. Attebury). In 1918, Burt was a private in the Air Service of the U.S. Army. His literary life was successful from the beginning, and remarkably so after the 1924 publication of *The Diary of a Dude-Wrangler* ^[2], personal experiences at Jackson Hole.

The Burts, seeking a mild winter climate, first went to Southern Pines in 1919 at the suggestion of [James Boyd](#) ^[3], a Princeton student of Burt's. For a number of years they rented various houses in the town. Though they remained legal residents of Wyoming, in 1927 they purchased and remodeled Hibernia, a large house adjoining that of the Boyds, calling it their second home. During winters in North Carolina, Burt was active in local and state affairs and was a member of the Kiwanis Club and the Southern Pines Library Association. His many letters to the editors of North Carolina newspapers reflected his agitation concerning such matters as what he termed the "billboard blight." He was president of the [State Literary and Historical Association](#) ^[4] in 1939–40 and was awarded an LL.D. by [The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill](#) ^[5]. He was also a member of the American Institute of Arts and Letters and an elector of the Hall of Fame. In 1952, feeling that Hibernia was too large for them, the Burts sold the house but promised to return often to Southern Pines. Following a long illness, Burt died in Jackson Hole and was buried there.

In the High Hills ^[6] (1914), a book of poems, was the first of Burt's nineteen titles and was succeeded by *John O'May and Other Stories* ^[7] (1918). Three more books of poetry and three more collections of short stories were published, in addition to five novels: *The Interpreter's House* ^[8] (1924), *The Delectable Mountains* ^[9] (1927), *Festival* ^[10] (1931), *Entertaining the Islanders* ^[11] (1933), and *Along These Streets* ^[12] (1942). For the most part about Philadelphians, the novels are subject, according to Nathaniel Burt, to "a sort of unwillingness to either accept wholly or wholly reject the conventions of Romance. There is always a love story, there is always a certain strict plotting of acceptance, withdrawal, misunderstanding, and final clinch that leads to much amusing discussion of the difference between men and women, but which does not escape a sort of artificiality." Probably because of its conventions and subject matter, Burt's fiction was featured in such well-paying magazines as *Red Book*, *McCall's*, *Colliers*, and the *Saturday Evening Post*. Two collections of essays, one volume of political satire, *Powder River* ^[13] (1938) in "The Rivers of America" series, and *Philadelphia: Holy Experiment* ^[14] (1945) rounded out his book-length publications. Burt was an Episcopalian and a [Democrat](#) ^[15]. A portrait by the Philadelphia artist Adolphe Borie is a family possession.

References:

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[Burt Papers](#) ^[16] (Princeton University Library, Princeton, N.J.).

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