

Edwin Markham

1872 Graduate of the
California State Normal School

As we near our 150th anniversary in 2007, it is a good time to reflect on our past. SJSU can boast a world-famous alum from the 19th century – educator and poet Edwin Markham. He is best known for his world-famous poem, “The Man with the Hoe”* published in the *San Francisco Examiner* on January 15, 1899. The poem dealt with challenges faced by laborers. Another one of his poems, *Outwitted*, is displayed on a plaque on the west side of Tower Hall (see below). He also wrote “Lincoln, Man of the People,” “Preparedness” and many others. In addition to being a poet he was an educator in California for many years. He also was involved in social issues including efforts to enact child labor laws.

In 1915 Mr. Markham was in San Francisco for a lecture and was invited to campus. He arrived on February 23 as guest of “normal school’s own poet, Dr. Henry Meade Bland.” President Dailey introduced Mr. Markham to a crowd of about 400 as “the most distinguished graduate of the San Jose Normal School.” Markham spoke for about two hours and recited poems including “The Man with the Hoe” “which had been hailed as ‘the battle cry of the next thousand years’ at the time of its publication in 1899. The original draft had been written in San Jose while Markham resided with his mother in a small cottage at 432 South Eighth Street.”¹ The Associated Student Child Development Center is at this location now and a plaque commemorates Markham. In the late 1980’s the house was moved to History Park and is now the headquarters for Poetry Center San Jose.²

Outwitted

He drew a circle that shut me out
Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout
But love and I had the wit to win
We drew a circle that took him in.



* To read the entire poem and see the painting, visit <http://www.wagner.edu/library/embio>, or http://www.english.uiuc.edu/maps/poets/m_r/markham/markham.htm as well as many other websites on this famous SJSU alumnus.

¹ Gilbert, *Pioneers for One Hundred Years*, page 127.

² <http://www.pcsj.org/markham.html>.