Sir Frank from Ohio

Bad weather, worse times
the young Scholar-Pilgrim
to Piney Woods propelled.
Fifteen years passed;
Chicago’s courses completed.
A scene surreal in Baylor chapel
(a window open, a hound, then horrors!)--
a capricious Twist-of-Fate
from mercurial Providence
returning him to Texas terrain.
In time Duty issued
one late life, last siren call
to the Pilgrim now grown gray--
not to sleep or slumber yet,
but rather resume ascent
toward the terminal degree,
his ultimate mountain Grail.
Sir Frank from Ohio
to Stanford’s Dark Dungeon came.

Charles Francis Guittard 2020

Editor’s Note:

Charles Francis Guittard, grandson of Francis “Frank” Gevrier Guittard, penned this piece for Baylor University’s Celebration of 100 Guittard History Fellows & Guittard-Verlander-Voegtle History Scholars planned for fall 2020. Although “Sir Frank” at age fifty-six had commenced a long, lonely battle for his Ph.D. in “Stanford’s Dark Dungeon,” that darkness eventually gave way to a cheery dawn in 1931 seven years later when he was awarded his sheepskin. Re-energized by his experience, Frank returned to Waco to teach Baylor students history another nineteen years. The poem itself ends on a dark note to suggest the terrors Frank began to experience as an older student with an unusually large stake in the endeavor, hopefully creating a suspenseful prelude for the last chapters of Charles’ book, A Ph.D.’s Journey: The Life & Times of Frank Guittard. Professor Guittard, a fact-focused teacher of history, but tender-hearted opera lover, died on his way to attend a performance of Donizetti’s romantic comedy masterpiece, The Elixir of Love.