



Sherlock Holmes

C O L L E C T I O N S

"Your merits should be publicly recognized" (STUD)



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Bill Rabe material comes to Sherlock Holmes Collections

John Rabe described his late father Bill as a man who had fun in life, and managed to make a living by doing it. That in itself is quite an epithet. With the donation of Bill Rabe's Sherlockian Collection to the University of Minnesota, the family has ensured that others will have as much enjoyment studying his materials as he had collecting it.

John Rabe recently made two trips to the Wilson Library at the University to personally deliver the materials that his father amassed over the years. At this time, his collection is awaiting cataloging and integration into the Sherlock Holmes Collections. It is, as the Master stated, "a treasure trove indeed." (BLUE)

Rabe's Collection contains journals, movie materials, playbills, children's papers, and papers covering his extensive other interests. Over 400 books have been donated, which include pastiches and foreign language editions, as well as writings by Vincent Starrett and Conan Doyle's non-Sherlockian

works. Bill's own *Who's Who and What's What* published in 1961 is included in the donated books, as is a master corrected copy. Many news clippings and photos such as the one in this article are also included.

Journals of various societies, especially the Old Soldiers of Baker Street (SOBS) and the Amateur Mendicant Society, take a special place among the materials. Photos and menus of the Amateur Mendicant Society dinners were special souvenirs for Rabe. Contained in one box were numerous small bottles of Scotch, all marked with the Old SOB's breakfast dates. Of

Rabe material continued on page 2



From the Rabe Collection

100

YEARS AGO

Ada and the Napoleon of Photography

One of the mysteries presented in the last issue of this newsletter was the identity of Ada, the woman to whom Sir Arthur Conan Doyle inscribed a photograph of himself. The inscription reads: "To Ada, from her old friend Arthur Conan Doyle, Jan. 18, '97." The photograph was taken in New York when Doyle was on his 1894 tour. A peripheral conundrum was the identity of the photographer whose printed signature ("Savony" or "Saxony", we thought) seemed difficult to decode.

Not so for Catherine Cooke of the Marylebone Library in London. Writes Ms. Cooke, "it occurs to me to wonder whether the photographer might not be ... Sarony, best-known over here at least for his portrait photographs of Oscar Wilde in aesthetic garb, taken during his trip to America lecturing?"

Further research into Sarony brought to light Napoleon Sarony who was born March 9, 1821 and practiced painting, lithography and photography from the 1840's until his death in New York on November 8, 1896. He was known for his photographs of celebrities of the late 19th century including Wilde and Sarah Bernhardt. Apropos of the his Doyle connection, Sarony was popularly known as "the Napoleon of Photographers."

And Ada? Since the photograph of Doyle is that used on the cover of Christopher Redmond's book *Welcome to America, Mr. Holmes*, we asked Chris

if he had any ideas. He wrote, "what I know is based on letters I saw when I was at Minnesota in the summer of 1995. I reported on the matter in my Waterloo Sherlockian Letter #35, with a follow-up in #36 ... But you won't learn much from them really, I fear, and in particular you won't find out who Ada was. ... The only Ada I can turn up is Ada Waller, wife of Bryan Charles Waller. Doyle's mother was living at Masongill with Waller well before he married Ada in 1896 — I don't know whether she could plausibly have been an "old friend" of ACD by 1897."

Chris suggested contacting another Chris, Christopher Roden who put forth what seems to be the best lead: "There is a letter in the Berg collection (one of the many written to the Hoare family). This particular one is undated, but I'd guess 1889, as ACD talks about the second printing of Micah Clarke being almost out of print.

The relevant part, however, is the following sentence: "I am so grieved to hear about poor Ada Pashby. What a villain the man must be! Let me know if friends can help in any way."

That's it. There's nothing more to go on, but it would seem that there was an Ada in Birmingham whom ACD knew, and who might well be the person to whom the photograph in the collection was dedicated.

She's certainly my best candidate yet — though who she was, what she did, and how well ACD knew her, I have absolutely no idea!"

Many thanks to these cultural detectives for their help. If and when we discover more about Ms. Ada Pashby, or evidence to discount her as Doyle's Ada, you, our readers, will be among the first to know. ♡

Rabe material continued from page 1

interest are the party favors and other memorabilia from the BSI dinners in the 1980's and 1990's.

Radio scripts for "Purple Shadow" and the engineers script for the Amateur Mendicant Meeting that was telecast live on WTVS Detroit on January 2, 1958 are intact, with notes by Rabe. The playbill for the musical "Baker Street" and the script for "Sherlock Holmes", written by William Gillette and presented by the Wayne University Theatre, mark other theatrical occasions.

The Rabe family has kept some of Bill's personal correspondence. Donated were the originals of letters by Art Buchwald and Julian Wolf concerning the Amateur Mendicant Society. The 1960 news clippings pertaining to the death of Julian Wolf reside in the same box, along with the 1981 Detroit Public Library's selected Sherlock Holmes Booklist. "Once More Watson, Into the Breach" by W. T. Rabe, published in 1949 by the University of Detroit is a special memento.

Donated materials also include an extensive run of the Danish "Sherlock Holmes Klubben I Danmark" journals from the 1970's, 1960's journals of the Illustrious Clients, the Serpentine Muse and programs from the Silver Blaze of 1962. The press kits of "Young Sherlock Holmes" and "The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes" are some of the film memorabilia.

Bill's son Karl, as a young child, wrote a paper about Sherlock Holmes. Scoring 30 out of 30, he inscribed it to his father and gave it to him. The inscribed materials carry on to other interests as well. Two autographed photos of Laurel and Hardy, one to each of Rabe's daughters, are indicative of his other loves. The Dancing Cuckoos, Michigan Tent of the International Sons of the Desert, with his 1978 name badge from their convention, were part of the Laurel and Hardy items.

Bill Rabe was an Army Lieutenant and Chief Medical Officer (ret.) of the Old Soldiers of Baker Street, the military scion of the Baker Street Irregulars, when his fiancée Anne Rady traveled to Berlin from Detroit in 1952 to marry him. As part of their Swiss honeymoon, Bill and Anne carried a plaque to Meiringen to affix to the wall of the Rossli Hotel. The Hotel stands on the site of the Englissherhof where Holmes ate lunch on a day in May in 1891. The inscription reads:

To this place in May, 1891 came Dr. John Watson and Mr. Sherlock Holmes, and in this vicinity did Holmes best the infamous Prof. Moriarty in mortal combat; though Holmes himself was thought to have perished in the struggle over Reichenbach Falls he escaped and returned to London in the Spring of 1894. He has since retired to Sussex and Bee Keeping.

A copy of the "Routine and Court-Martial Orders", General Provisions, was part of a student packet issued at Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indiana. In May 1960, Colonel Bill Rabe received the inscribed booklet, stating "Colonel Bill Rabe, with kindest canonical regards. My time here at the A. G. School has not been entirely wasted. Irregularly, Ted Schultz, Capt. AGC."

In the early 1950's when Rabe was Public Relations Director for the University of Detroit, he founded a syndicated talk show called *Ask the Professor* still airing weekly on 26 stations nationwide. As moderator, Rabe was described as having a flare for the bizarre.

When Rabe was at Lake Superior State University (LSSU) he and another faculty member, Peter Thomas created *The Woods-Runner*, "meeting place of the Unicorn Hunters" which existed between 1970 and 1986. Sons of the Desert founder, Jack McCabe who was also at LSSU, aided their efforts. While *The Woods-Runner* was principally a literary magazine, there was always a certain tone of wit and whimsy,

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About Bill Rabe

by Peter E. Blau

One of the very nice things about the world of Sherlockians is that one gets to meet so many unusual people. And Bill Rabe was one of the best of those unusual people: talented and interesting and quite impossible to define.

Well, one might attempt a definition, noting the many things he was interested in, and the things he had fun doing. Starting societies, for example, one of them being the Friends of Lizzie Borden, of whose members only one thing was expected: to honor her birthday every year by going out into the woods with a hatchet and chopping down a tree.

Another was The Friends of the Raisin, for those who felt that it was unfair that bananas were the only fruit to have little stickers (calling attention to Chiquita Banana): Bill proposed that very small stickers be created and applied to raisins.

He founded and publicized Silent Record Week, by way of encouraging jukebox owners to allow people to buy a few minutes of silence. And he quickly realized that something else was needed, and started a company called Hush Records, to issue recordings such as a single devoted to "The Silent Majority" (in those days when that phrase was a byword) and a long-playing original cast album of "An Evening with Marcel Marceau."

He wrote annual book reviews of the Detroit telephone book for local newspapers (a different newspaper each year). As head of public relations for Lake Superior State College in Sault Ste. Marie, he welcomed spring each year by setting fire to a snowman, and he created an International Open Stone-Skipping Tournament on the Fourth of July on Mackinac Island. And he helped publicize the island's Grand Hotel with World Sauntering Day, celebrated annually on the world's

longest front porch (sauntering, he insisted, must be distinguished from meandering, lollygaging, moseying, and sashaying).

In the world of Sherlockians his projects were just as varied. He visited Meiringen, and was instrumental in installing the first plaque at the Reichenbach Falls, and arranged for his friend Art Buchwald to write about the event in the *International Herald Tribune*.

And he founded the Old Soldiers of Baker Street, which he delighted in calling the "Old SOBs". He also started *The Martha Hudson Breakfast* at the Hotel Algonquin, in the long-ago days when a few out-of-town visitors had nothing much to do on the morning before the Baker Street Irregular' annual dinner.

He compiled and published his landmark Sherlockian *Who's Who and What's What* in 1961, and then published a revised second edition in 1962 (and no one has had the energy and enterprise to follow in his footsteps). And his work in radio helped when he recorded the goings-on at the annual dinners of the Baker Street Irregulars, and produced his "Voices from Baker Street."

He decided to find the man who actually wrote the song "We Never Mention Aunt Clara" and came to Washington to interview him, and published a delightful booklet about Bud Willis (who eventually was startled to learn that Carl Sandburg refused to believe the song was not an old American folk song, and had to threaten a lawsuit to get Sandburg to back down).

And of course Bill was a delightful story-teller, but all too often told his stories to small groups of appreciative listeners, and all too seldom in print. How grand it would be to read his autobiography. ♡

The Old Globe Theatre, KPBS-FM of San Diego, and "The Mask of Moriarty"

by Julie McKuras

What do these three things have in common? The Old Globe Theatre of San Diego, with its production of "The Mask of Moriarty", and KPBS have recently donated materials to the Sherlock Holmes Collections at the University of Minnesota.

In preparation for the production and the playbill, The Old Globe Theatre contacted public radio station KPBS-FM of San Diego. On Dec. 9, 1996, the KPBS program "These Days" with host Dan Erwine and guests Willis Frick and Bruce Southworth featured a program discussing Sherlock Holmes. The program proved to be extremely popular. As a result, Southworth wrote "The Master Detective" for the playbill.

Opening on September 20, 1997, "The Mask of Moriarty" by Hugh Leonard, starred Paxton Whitehead as Sherlock Holmes, and Tom Lacy as Dr. John Watson. Whitehead, in an article featured in "On-Air" Magazine, indicated "I didn't really want to play Sherlock Holmes again... I did that 20 years ago (on Broadway in "Crucifer of Blood)". Leonard's script convinced him to take the role, teaming him once again with Tom Lacy. The San Diego Union-Tribune, Arts Critic Anne Marie Welsh described the play as a clever, solidly constructed production "somewhere between farce and a witty comedy of detective manners." Due to its popularity, the run of the play was extended through November 8, 1997. The Old Globe donated copies of the playbill, script, numerous photographs, including an autographed photo of Whitehead and Lacy, several slides, and copies of all pertinent newspaper and magazine clippings.

"These Days" with host Dan Erwine featured an interview and call-in segment with guests Paxton Whitehead and Tom Lacy on October 1, 1997. Dan Erwine, in a note submitted for our newsletter,

indicated that his only complaint with the play was its "departure from the sacred writings of Conan Doyle." Whitehead, with "his basso profundo a precise surgical instrument", and Lacy were "delightful gentlemen to interview." The program had numerous theater attendees call in to praise the play and their performances. "These Days" Director Jill Fritz also wrote that several days previous to their production with Lacy and Whitehead, English actor John Inman of "Are You Being Served?" a popular British series, had been in the studio with an freshly injured left arm, a result of an accident at a podium. During Whitehead's tour of the KPBS-FM facilities, a soundproof door swung closed, hitting him on the arm. Jill wrote that in her discussion with Dan Erwine, they agreed that "we had just about filled our yearly quota of whacking and injuring English actors." KPBS-FM donated issues of their "On Air" magazine and copies of both the December 1996 and October 1997 broadcasts.

The Friends of the Sherlock Holmes Collections Newsletter is proud to feature these recent donations to the Sherlock Holmes Collections. ♡



Tom Lacy and Paxton Whitehead

Musings

Our 4th issue already. Throughout our first year we have received many positive comments as well as suggestions for content. Response to our 'mysteries' has been very gratifying. Perhaps most importantly many of our readers have made donations of either money or material. The Friends of the Sherlock Holmes Collections and the University of Minnesota are grateful. All of your comments, suggestions and donations are appreciated.

In this issue we follow up with our 100 Years Ago topic from Issue 3: the identity of Ada and the photographer who took the 1894 picture of Doyle. We also received a letter from Saul Cohen, a longtime friend of John Bennett Shaw and U.S. attorney for the late Dame Jean Conan Doyle, who notes that Frances Crane (whose New Yorker article on the auction of the Czar's books in 1933 never appeared) was the author of many mysteries, several of which were set in New Mexico.

Our main feature in this issue is the announcement of new material donated by the family of Bill Rabe. Bill, as you'll read was a unique and interesting man as well as devoted Sherlockian. Thanks to Peter Blau for sharing his thoughts on Bill Rabe. Thanks also to John Rabe and the entire Rabe family for entrusting this material to the Sherlock Holmes Collections.

Another donation was made to the Collection from the Old Globe Theatre in San Diego. Material from their recent performance of Hugh Leonard's "Mask of Moriarty" is now archived here. This donation was arranged by Julie McKuras, newly elected President of the Norwegian Explorers, and her sister Jill Fritz, a Director at KPBS radio in San Diego.

Compliments of the season! ♡

Bruce E. Southworth, B.S.I.
Editor

Rabe material continued from page 3

contributed mostly by Rabe, dramatizing an important lesson: life is long and hard, but if we avoid taking ourselves too seriously, then perhaps we can be survivors. Much Holmesiana appeared in *The Woods-Runner*, along with articles reflecting another of his interests, Lizzie Borden of Fall River, MA. He and Peter not only created *The Woods-Runner*, but the *Unicorn Hunters*, the yearly Shakespeare's Birthday celebration, the Snowman Burning ceremony, and many others. Rabe also created the annual Stone-Skipping Contest that is held on Windermere Point. Charles Kuralt covered that event for an episode of his program *On the Road*. When testing his own stone-skipping technique, Kuralt achieved only a few hops. Kuralt said to Rabe, "That was pretty bad, wasn't it?" and Rabe replied "No, it's not bad for a beginner." When Kuralt pressed him to be honest, Rabe said, "All right, it's pretty bad." According to Peter Thomas, "That [was] Rabe for all the world; he was raised to be courteous, but if he couldn't be courteous, he was always honest." Whimsical and witty to the end, Bill wrote his own epitaph. It is there on his gravestone in the Catholic Cemetery on Mackinac Island: "Life is a grave matter."

And finally, there is another mystery among the shelves of the Collections. The first donation to the University of Minnesota from Bill Rabe was presented before his death. In boxes sealed until the year 2000, is his work about the infamous Aunt Clara. The recordings and documentation of the development of the song are alleged to be in the box. Will the world of the year 2000 be ready when we are allowed to verify this? The conclusion of the mystery will be announced in a subsequent issue of this newsletter. ♡

50 YEARS AGO

From the archives of the Norwegian Explorers

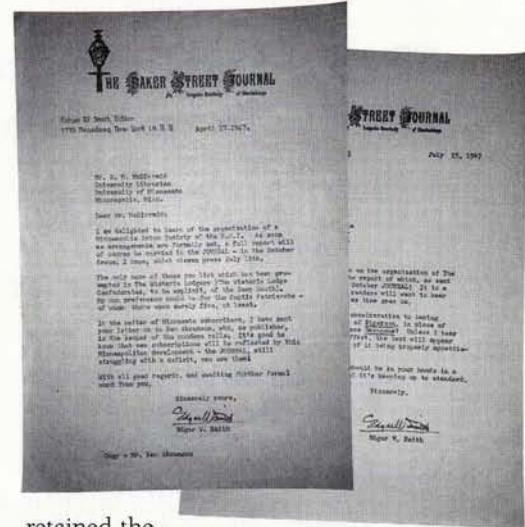
On April 11, 1947 the inaugural meeting of a new scion society of the Baker Street Irregulars took place. On the next day E. W. "Mac" McDiarmid, University Librarian of the University of Minnesota, wrote to Edgar W. Smith, the editor of the Baker Street Journal and the head of the Irregulars. Mac wrote that several names had been discussed but he "was asked to list several of our suggestions and inquire from you as to whether or not any of them had already been pre-empted. Roughly, in order of preference, they are:

- The Coptic Patriarchs
- The NonPareil club
- The Wisteria Lodgers
- The Priory Scholars
- Mrs. Hudson's Boarders

Smith answered five days later, "delighted to learn of the organization of a Minneapolis Scion of the B.S.I." Smith was also encouraged by the potential new subscribers to the Baker Street Journal noting, "the JOURNAL still struggling with deficit, can use them!"

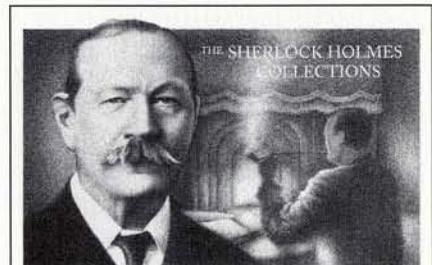
Unfortunately, a gap exists in the archives at this point for the next letter, dated July 15, 1947, has Smith congratulating Mac on the organization of The Norwegian Explorers and assuring him a report of it would appear in the October 1947 Baker Street Journal. "It is a noble undertaking, and readers will want to hear more of this new scion..." wrote Smith.

It is interesting to note that Smith suggested a new choice of title for the head of the Explorers: "Have you ever given consideration to taking unto yourself the title of Sigerson, in place of the now-rather-commonplace Gasogene?" However, as reported in the Journal (vol. 2, # 4, OS) Mac



retained the title Gasogene and he reported enthusiastically, "The Explorers confidently expect to announce discoveries which will shed great light on a certain undocumented period of the master's life."

The first general meeting of the Norwegian Explorers took place in January 1948 with Mac newly christened as Sigerson. It is from this year the Explorers mark their 50th anniversary with a celebratory conference in August 1998, at which E. W. "Mac" McDiarmid will still reign as Sigerson. ♡



The *Friends of the Sherlock Holmes Collections* is a quarterly newsletter published by the Friends of the Sherlock Holmes Collections which seek to promote the activities, interests and needs of the Special Collections and Rare Books Department, University of Minnesota Libraries.

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A Word from our President

This past year it has been my privilege to serve as President of The Friends of the Sherlock Holmes Collections. This newsletter was started after the Collections Advisory Committee suggested our first priority should be to improve communications and capture the spirit of John Bennett Shaw. I am pleased by the response of many readers to the mysteries of the collection and donations of money and material. The Friends exist to raise money to help support the University of Minnesota in its' mission to collect, preserve and interpret Sherlockiana.

The by-laws of the Friends in Article II Membership, Section A Qualifications states:

Any person or group wishing to support the purpose of the organization, upon making an annual contribution for the current fiscal year, shall be a member.

It is just that easy; make a contribution, be a member, receive the Newsletter! All current members will receive an appeal on the anniversary of their last donation. I hope you will all respond with a generous donation. A special membership meeting of the Friends of the Sherlock Holmes Collections will occur in conjunction with the 50th Anniversary of the Norwegian Explorers, August 7-9, 1998 in Minneapolis. ♡

Richard J. Sveum, M.D.
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Mark your Calendars

The 1998 membership meeting of the Friends of the Sherlock Holmes Collections will occur in conjunction with the 50th Anniversary of the Norwegian Explorers, to be held August 7, 8, and 9, 1998 in Minneapolis, MN.

Sherlock Holmes Collections

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Mailing list corrections requested—

Because of the high cost of returned newsletters, we would appreciate being informed of changes of address or other corrections.

6 *P* Friends of the Sherlock Holmes Collections



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