THE NORWEGIAN EXPLORERS
OF MINNESOTA

The Saga of a
Sherlockian Scion Society

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The Norwegian Explorers
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The Norwegian Explorers of Minnesota

Saga of a Sherlockian Scion Society

One of the unusual phenomena associated with the great popularity of Sherlock Holmes is the existence of many "scion societies." These curious organizations vary widely in their activities, permanence, and personnel. They come and go, often depending on the presence of a strong aficionado—a devoted Sherlockian who has both the time and the infrastructure (an euphemism for typing help and the like) to keep the group alive—a healthy leader who does not move frequently.

It would be difficult to determine an exact number of scion societies, much less to evaluate their activities. A number of groups such as the Speckled Band of Boston, the Copper Beeches of Philadelphia, and the Norwegian Explorers of Minnesota have existed for a long time. On the other hand, many scions once listed in various communications of the Sherlockian sodality have ceased to exist.

1. Scion. Webster says "descendant." Sherlockians use it to mean a society, related to us acknowledged by The Baker Street Irregulars.

2. Ronald D. De Waal counted more than 350 active societies in his monumental Universal Sherlock Holmes (Toronto, Metropolitan Reference Library, 1994), v. 3, 773.
Certainly the most noted of the societies are The Baker Street Irregulars, Inc. and the Sherlock Holmes Society of London. The BSI is regarded as the parent society of the various United States scions, while the Sherlock Holmes Society of London is the most visible of the societies in England. The BSI also serves as a de facto agency for legitimizing the names of scion societies in the United States. That is, the BSI has tried to discourage duplication of society names, although it has not been entirely successful. There are, for example, the Diogenes Club of New York and the Diogenes Club of the Monterey Peninsula. In spite of the seeming proliferation of scions, Albert and Julia Rosenblatt noted in 1985 that “there are no societies in eight American states.”

United States scions vary greatly in their activities and programs. However, a common activity is the discussion of matters pertaining to the Sacred Writings, and the carrying out of the prescribed rituals (the canonical toasts, the reading of the Constitution and Byelaws [sic], the intoning of the Musgrave Ritual, and so forth). In addition, some societies give plays or musicals, some have film showings, some create radio programs, others have contests (for example, the late John Bennett Shaw’s infamous quizzes and his Colonel Moran’s annual trap shoot), and many produce publications. In June 1994, The Baker Street Journal listed the titles of forty-one Sherlockian periodicals received, most of them published by scion societies. Books of articles, essays, puzzles, and so forth—such as the Speckled Band’s Second Cub, the Norwegian Explorers’ Cultivating Sherlock Holmes, and The Sherlock Holmes Crossword—form a substan-

4. Mr. Shaw died on October 13, 1994. He had been in ill health for some time.
tial portion of the Sherlockian bibliography. Truly, the Sherlock Holmes phenomenon represents one of the greatest outpourings of interest, dedication, speculation, exposition, and fraternization in all of literature.

While it may not be entirely correct to state that the Norwegian Explorers of Minnesota is a typical scion society, its story illustrates many of the characteristics of Sherlockian societies. Its activities have been irregular (pun intended). It has contributed to the furtherance of the Sacred Writings by discussions and confrontations. It has added to the published bibliography of Sherlockian literature. It has produced several plays and contributed to the performance of others. The society has also been described in the press, discussed on radio, and modestly represented on television.

Until recently, no dues were charged nor were there bylaws or a constitution before 1986. The expenses of the society were covered, in part, by sales of its books and by “irregular” contributions from membership. Since their incorporation in 1986, the Explorers have become more “regular.”

While not the largest of scions, the Explorers is certainly not the smallest. It is neither the oldest nor one of the newest. It is probably not the most widely known of scions, but neither is it unknown. Unlike many scions, it has no regular schedule of meetings except for an annual meeting required by Minnesota Statutes. However, unlike some scions, it does not limit itself to one meeting a year. It probably has fewer investitured members of the BSI than some scions, but it possibly has had more Nobel Prize winners (two) in its

5. On August 19, 1986, the Explorers were incorporated as a non-profit educational and charitable corporation under the laws of Minnesota. Legally governed by a Board of Directors, the scion has since performed as a tax-exempt non-profit corporation, though still “irregular” in many respects.
membership than any other Sherlockian society: Philip S. Hench in 1950 and William Lipscomb in 1976. All in all, the story of the Norwegian Explorers is worth telling both for its similarities to other scions and for its peculiarities.

The Baker Street Irregulars, the premier U.S. scion, was formed in 1934, when Christopher Morley used Felix Morley's crossword puzzle as an invitation to membership. Other scion societies followed, led by the Five Orange Pips of Westchester County, probably the first of the U.S. scions, also in 1934.

The Norwegian Explorers of Minnesota as a scion society dates to 1947. Five faculty members of the University of Minnesota who lunched together at the Campus Club discovered that each was an informed reader of Sherlock Holmes adventures. At least one of the five subscribed to The Baker Street Journal, which began publication in 1946, where scion societies being formed around the United States were listed. The question of a Twin Cities chapter was raised, and the present writer was asked to explore matters further. Among the names first suggested for the Minnesota chapter were the Priory Scholars and the Coptic Patriarchs. However, correspondence with Edgar W. Smith, then Commissioner of The Baker Street Irregulars, revealed that groups had already used these names. Other names were suggested, among them, "The Norwegian Explorers." This name was unique and it was adopted. The name of the chief officer of the group was to be the Sigerson, and so it has been recorded. Since 1947, the existence of the Norwegian Explorers has been continuous with one exception—a two-year hiatus when no meet-

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6. "You may have read of the remarkable explorations of a Norwegian named Sigerson, but I am sure that it never occurred to you that you were receiving news of your friend." Sherlock Holmes in The Adventure of the Empty House.
ings took place and when, for all practical purposes, the society was dormant, due to the absence of the Sigerson on a two-year assignment in Chile.

The first official meeting of the group took place on a cold January day in 1948 at the Covered Wagon restaurant in Minneapolis. At that meeting, several papers were read and discussed, among them “The Case of the Beribboned Manuscript” by T. C. Blegen. The theory that Sherlock Holmes actually retired after the “great hiatus” was propounded by E. W. McDiarmid, the Sigerson. McDiarmid has pursued his theory in several publications.

In the early years of the Explorers, programs included discussions of “My favorite Sherlock Holmes case and why,” the Canonical authenticity of “The Man Who Was Wanted” (Hearst Cosmopolitan, August 1946), and “Did Sherlock Holmes Retire?” During this period, Dean T. C. Blegen postponed his research (and ultimately never completed it) on “The Beribboned Manuscript” in favor of the study of Sherlock Holmes as poet. In 1951, this study became the first publication by the Norwegian Explorers, The Crowded Box-room, Sherlock Holmes as poet. This book, printed in a limited edition of three hundred copies, was soon sold out and is now a rarity.

Discussions among members of the Explorers revealed other publishable articles. Dean Blegen’s continued research led him to explore Sherlock Holmes as sportman. A radio program dedicated to Sherlock Holmes led to an article by Blegen and McDiarmid discussing the enduring interest in Holmes. This article appeared in the Explorers’ second publication, Sherlock Holmes: Master Detective, published in 1952 by Sumac Press, La Crosse, Wisconsin. This volume is also out of print.

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In 1950, Philip S. Hench, a distinguished Mayo Clinic physician and a Sherlockian, shared with two other scientists the Nobel Prize in physiology and medicine. While traveling in Switzerland after receiving the prize, Dr. Hench visited Meiringen and stopped to view Reichenbach Falls, where the fatal confrontation between Holmes and Moriarty (the Napoleon of Crime) took place. Hench was amazed to find no recognition of the fatal encounter; indeed, the falls were shrouded in substantial ignorance of all matters Holmesian.

Upon his return to the States, Hench enlisted the services of the Norwegian Explorers, of whom he became an active member, to remedy the situation. In a meeting of the group, Dr. Hench described his chagrin that the Great Detective was not remembered at the place of his “death” and suggested that the Explorers contact the Sherlock Holmes Society of London to see if it would be possible to erect a plaque at the Falls of the Reichenbach where Holmes and Moriarty grappled. Dr. Hench’s enthusiasm and a substantial financial contribution combined to convince the Explorers that this plaque would indeed would be a worthy project. A campaign was soon under way; its successful outcome was due in large measure to the activities of treasurer Ronald Hubbs. The plaque was designed, crafted, and installed by Huégenin Frères of Switzerland. In the summer of 1957, a delegation from Minnesota met with the Sherlock Holmes Society of London and proceeded to Meiringen for the official dedication of the plaque. The plaque, originally placed at the funicular station at the midpoint of the falls, has now been moved to Doyle Plaza where it is more accessible to tourists.

Activities concerning the planning, execution, and dedication of this plaque gave rise to a third publication by the Explorers, Exploring Sherlock Holmes. Dr. Hench reported on his trip to Meiringen; Dr. Bryce Crawford (BSI, The Solitary Cyclist) reported
on the location of the plaque; other articles were contributed by Dr. E. W. Ziebarth, Dean T. C. Blegen, and the Explorer's second investitured Baker Street Irregular,7 Thomas L. Daniels (The Giant Rat of Sumatra). Daniels reported on an unsuccessful search for the "Battered Tin Dispatch Box," somewhere in the vaults of the Bank of Cox and Co., at Charing Cross." This publication also soon sold out, testimony to the craftsmanship of the Sumac Press publisher, Emerson G. Wulling.

Another of the irregular activities of the Norwegian Explorers has been the promotion of Sherlock Holmes plays. This involvement began in 1959 when James Horswill, then a drama student at the University of Minnesota, edited, produced, and directed "a play based on The Speckled Band." The play was staged in two rooms in Coffman Union on the University of Minnesota campus. In 1972, the Explorers assisted a Minnesota writer, John Fenn, with his play, Sherlock Holmes and the Affair of the Amarnus Regent, by arranging a theater party for the opening night. A recent Explorer excursion into original musicals produced "The Adventure of the Separated Savoyards," performed by the Red-Throated League at Luther Seminary in St. Paul in June 1991.

A related activity of the Explorers has been attending plays, with a dinner preceding the play and a discussion period following. Plays attended include The Hound of the Baskervilles, produced by the Children's Theatre of Minneapolis; William Gillette's Sherlock Holmes; a University of Minnesota Show Boat Theatre performance of the Gillette play including "ollios,"8 the Case of the Baker Street Irregulars; and an Actor's Theatre performance of Sherlock's Last Case.

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7. First was E. W. McDiarmid (The Bruce-Partington Plans).
8. "Ollios" are the variety or musical acts performed between the acts of a burlesque or minstrel show.
Certainly no scion society would hold many meetings without seeing the numerous films in the Sherlockian treasure trove, and the Explorers are no exception. The Fox Movietone interview with Dr. A. C. Doyle has been shown to regular meetings of the Explorers and to groups who have requested a program dealing with the Master Detective. And while there have been many of the Basil Rathbone/Nigel Bruce performances of pseudo-Sherlock Holmes films, the Explorers have preferred the more faithful *Hound of the Baskervilles*, the popular *Silver Blaze*, and the *Triumph of Sherlock Holmes*, starring Arthur Wontner. Film parties have also been arranged for recent Holmes-related films: *The Seven-Per-Cent Solution, Murder by Decree, Sherlock Holmes's Younger Brother, They Might Be Giants, The Young Sherlock Holmes,* and *Without a Clue* with Michael Caine and Ben Kingsley.

When the television series *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, produced by Granada Films and starring Jeremy Brett and David Burke, appeared on the Twin City Public Broadcasting station, the Explorers arranged a special preview, which included a report from CBS Twin Cities anchorman Don Shelby, the Explorers’ official delegate to the 1984 annual birthday dinner of Sherlock Holmes in New York. In return for this courtesy, the Explorers staffed one of the station’s pledge periods, with a very impressive showing in phoned-in pledges. In 1986, Explorer R. Dixon Smith wrote a paper dealing with the Brett series, *Jeremy Brett and David Burke, An Adventure in Canonical Fidelity.* Published by the Mary Kahler and Philip Hench Collection of the University of Minnesota Libraries, this booklet too is out of print.

In the history of Sherlock Holmes radio, no name is probably more important than that of Edith Meiser, the writer and producer.

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9. Edith Meiser’s death occurred September 26, 1993. First of her sex to be honored as “The Woman,” she was noted for radio scripts and for a popular comic strip.
of the famous radio plays featuring Sherlock Holmes and his good friend, Dr. Watson. In 1983, the Explorers were privileged to have Ms. Meiser as a guest and speaker at a two-day series of Sherlockian gatherings. At that time, Ms. Meiser was interviewed delightfully by John Bennett Shaw, a program greatly enjoyed by the Sherlockians present. Subsequently, she was installed as an honorary member of the Norwegian Explorers. In 1988, to recognize the organization of the Edith Meiser collection of records, scripts, and radio programs, the Explorers created a dramatization of "The Affair of the Politician, The Lighthouse, and the Trained Cormorant." Sound effects were provided by Jim Ed Poole, aka. Tom Keith, sound effects man for Garrison Keillor programs.

The legacy of the Explorers' concern with radio has resulted in a number of programs promoting the merits of the Master Detective. A radio program for the blind brought together the writer and Allen J. Hubin, author of Armchair Detective, for a conversation about the popularity of Holmes. In 1983, Explorer and local TV anchorman, Don Shelby, produced a simulated radio program of The Adventure of the Speckled Band, acclaimed by the audience to be the finest performance yet made of that adventure. Colleen Needles and Dave Moore, also of television, played Helen Stoner and Dr. Watson, respectively. In 1984, several local radio programs featured Sherlockian themes and a discussion of the proposed Sherlock Holmes Center with its architect, Derham Groves, BSI (Black Jack of Ballarat). The University of Minnesota radio station has produced several programs featuring Holmes, often with participation from the Explorers. In 1991, WCAL, a National Public Radio founding member station in Northfield, Minnesota, did an interview on Sherlock Holmes with Bruce Southworth, BSI (Victor Hatherly), then president of the Norwegian Explorers.
An account of the "adventures" of the Norwegian Explorers would be incomplete without mention of the Mary Kahler and Philip S. Hench Collection of Sherlock Holmes and Arthur Conan Doyle at the University of Minnesota Library. In addition to his duties as a Mayo Clinic physician and his research leading to the discovery of cortisone and his subsequent Nobel Prize, Dr. Hench was an avid collector of Sherlock Holmes literature. At the time of his death, his collection had become one of the outstanding assemblages of Sherlockiana in the United States. Hench's long involvement in the affairs of the Norwegian Explorers, buttressed by his close association with the University of Minnesota, led him to decide that his collection should come to the University of Minnesota Library. In December 1978, Mary Kahler Hench, Dr. Hench's widow, who had substantially aided him in building the collection, presented it to the University.

Grants from the Saint Paul Foundation, the Bigelow Foundation, the General Mills Foundation, and the Davis Trust have aided the library in organizing and preserving this collection, now located in the Department of Special Collections and Rare Books. Members of the Explorers, notably Explorer Andrew Malec, BSI (Strange Old Book Collector), have contributed much time and talent to work on the collection.

The dedication of the Hench collection in 1984 was arranged and sponsored, in part, by the Norwegian Explorers. An exhibit of items from the collection was arranged by Malec, and dedication talks were given by Dr. James Shannon, "A Fixed Point in a Changing World," and Don Shelby, "Sherlock Holmes, Investigative Reporter."
Drawing from items in the collection, Malec has also set up two additional exhibits. The first, in 1983, presented items from the Hench collection featuring the actor William Gillette. Though the primary repositories for the Gillette collection are the Stowe-Day Library, Hartford, Connecticut, and Gillette Castle in Hadlyme, Connecticut, the Hench collection contains many pictures, a few letters, and some of Gillette’s notes and clippings.

The second exhibit prepared by Malec (1987) dealt with the noted American illustrator Frederic Dorr Steele. Dr. Hench had collected many of Steele’s original Holmes drawings; these drawings demonstrate the importance of Steele as the major American illustrator of Sherlock Holmes stories. For both of these exhibits, distinctive brochures were published.

Under the auspices of the University of Minnesota Libraries and with a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, Explorer members Andrew Malec, E.W. McDiarmid, and Austin McLean, BSI (The London Library), were major participants in the planning, preparation, and promotion of a traveling exhibit featuring the Holmes story. Malec wrote a descriptive pamphlet, “Investigating Sherlock Holmes,” to accompany the exhibit on its rounds throughout the upper midwest. Panels of memorabilia, books, and illustrations—seven in all—described Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, The Sherlock Holmes Canon, Holmes and His Times, The Detective Story, Illustrating Sherlock Holmes, Holmes in Other Media, and The Holmes Phenomenon. The exhibit has been one of the most popular of the University Art Museum’s traveling exhibits.

A long love affair between the Norwegian Explorers and John Bennett and Dorothy Rowe Shaw began in 1974 when the Shaws traveled to Minnesota for Mr. Shaw to deliver one of the most pop
ular Sherlockian lectures ever held in the Twin Cities. He spoke on "The Cult of Sherlock Holmes," a most complete and entertaining report of the Sherlock Holmes phenomenon. The Explorers' fourth book, *Cultivating Sherlock Holmes*, edited by Bryce L. Crawford, Jr. and Joseph B. Connors, featured a transcript and revision of Mr. Shaw's lecture. Additional articles included were "Holmes: The Potential Entrepreneur" by Ronald M. Hubbs; "Holmes and the Oxford Manner" by Joseph B. Connors; "The Master and the Maestro, Some Influences of Sherlock Holmes on Ellery Queen" by J. Randolph Cox, BSI (Conk Singleton Forgery Case); "The Case of the Missing Zincographer" by Ruth Berman; and "Arthur Conan Doyle (1859-1930): Medical Author" by Jack D. Key, BSI (Pritchard). This book, like many other Explorer publications, is no longer in print.

To list all of Mr. Shaw's subsequent programs at the University of Minnesota would require almost a year-by-year listing. One service, however, deserves special attention—his contribution in 1984 to "The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes in Minnesota." This international conference was sponsored by (take a deep breath): the Minneapolis Public Library; the Norwegian Explorers; the St. Paul Public Library; the University of Minnesota Department of Conferences, Continuing Education, and Extension; and Special Collections and Rare Books, Wilson Library. A two-day event specializing not only in Sherlock Holmes literature but also in Victorian England and detective fiction in general, the conference was international with contributions from Australia (Dorham Groves), Scandinavia (Nils Nordberg), and England (Michael Harrison). A special feature of the conference was a miniature reproduction of the Sherlock Holmes living quarters in 221B Baker Street, expertly crafted to exact specifications by Dorothy Rowe Shaw. The miniature 221B home remains at the University.
At the time of Mr. Shaw's first visit to Minnesota, the University Library had already acquired the Ilardi collection of Doyle rarities with the help of a grant from the McKnight Foundation. Though modest, the Ilardi collection contained some items of great interest. When the Hench Collection also came to Minnesota, it attracted Mr. Shaw's attention; in more than one visit, he was much impressed with its condition and its rarities. With the help of the St. Paul Foundation grants, the collection had been well organized and carefully protected. This loving attention must have planted a seed in Mr. Shaw's mind that Minnesota would also be a good place for his extensive collection of Sherlockiana. Thanks in large part to Shaw's own generosity, the University of Minnesota was able to acquire his collection. Gradually, Mr. Shaw transferred some of his holdings to Minnesota; in November 1993, the remainder of the collection was boxed and moved to the University of Minnesota Library. At this date, it is being checked and inventoried.

We have already mentioned the publication in 1985 of the delightful essay by the Rosenblatts, the *Sherlock Holmes Crossword*. The credit for this publication belongs to the favorite publisher of Norwegian Explorer items, Mr. Emerson G. Wulling, proprietor and owner of the Sumac Press, La Crosse, Wisconsin. Through the good offices of Sherlockian Walter Klinefelter, the crossword essay was sent to Wulling, with an endorsement for its further circulation. With his usual fine judgment and discrimination, Mr. Wulling rightfully deemed it worthy of wide circulation and enlisted the cooperation of the Explorers. The book was duly published in a well designed and carefully edited version (one fairly obvious typo and two others not so obvious) and was enthusiastically received by the Sherlockian world. Unfortunately, this essay has joined the list of out-of-print Norwegian Explorer publications.

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Though not an official publication of the Norwegian Explorers, *The Baker Street Dozen*, edited by Pj Doyle and E.W. McDiarmid (New York: Cooper and Weed, 1988) was instigated by the Explorers. It contained Conan Doyle’s twelve favorite adventures plus *Silver Blaze*, with an essay by a prominent Sherlockian on each adventure. Dame Jean Conan Doyle, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s child and heir, contributed a charming “Afterword” recalling her father’s reading of some of his stories. The authors and the editors agreed to donate any royalties to the Hench Collection at the University of Minnesota Library. Though not a direct contribution from the Norwegian Explorers, a considerable sum has been given to the Holmes collection from royalties. In addition, the scion has contributed regularly from its funds to the Collection.

Other activities of the Explorers have also featured the adventures of the world’s most famous detective. Members speak at schools, clubs (such as Rotary International), colleges, and other groups, always with the intention of keeping green the memory and appeal of the Master Detective. For example, Dr. Paul Martin, BSI (Dr. Leslie Armstrong), a past president of the Explorers, has spoken to numerous medical groups.

Members of the Explorers have taught classes about Sherlock Holmes at the University of Minnesota, at Metropolitan State University (Minneapolis), and in an official Community Education Class of eight weeks under the title, “The Cult of Sherlock Holmes.” To draw public attention to the adventures, the Explorers created a slide show detailing and explaining the world-wide attraction of Holmes.
While most meetings of the Explorers have taken place in the library at the University of Minnesota, the Explorers have tried to expand their audience by meeting at other places: St. Paul Public Library, Minneapolis Public Library, the Government Center in downtown Minneapolis, Augsburg College, and the University of St. Thomas. Such meetings have been designed to attract a wider audience to the doings of the Master Detective. At the Government Center, Alvin Rodin talked about the medical career of Arthur Conan Doyle. "An evening with Sir Arthur Conan Doyle with Mark McPherson" was presented at the University of St. Thomas. A trip to Northfield concentrated on visiting local bookstores. Two excursions to the Canterbury Downs Race Track featured the Silver Blaze handicaps, and an annual meeting with David Hammer of Gasogene Press as guest speaker took place at a downtown Minneapolis Hotel.

More than one place for meetings, no requirements for membership (other than an interest in Holmes), and very modest dues—all contribute to the Explorers' goal of spreading the ideals of justice and objectivity as so delightfully portrayed in the adventures of Sherlock Holmes.

In 1992, Explorer Jamie Hubbs organized a study group. This group meets monthly: at each meeting a specific adventure of Sherlock Holmes is read, studied, and discussed. Results of the informal group discussions are communicated through the pages of Explorations, the Explorers' regular newsletter. Preceded by "irregular" notices, Explorations was established as an official communication in 1986. Edited successively by Linda Reed, Bruce Southworth, and Allen Mackler, BSI (Sarasate), it has now distributed twenty-four issues and aims at a "regular" quarterly appearance.

In June 1993, the Explorers sponsored another conference "Sherlock Holmes' Victorian Criminal Classes: Rogues, Rascals, and
Criminals.” This conference was also international in scope with attendees from Canada and Great Britain. Speakers included Jon L. Lellenburg, A. L. Rodin, and Carole Nelson Douglas. In addition to Moriarty, criminals such as Palmer and Pritchard, Charley Peack, and “The Most Winning Women” were discussed.

Much of the foregoing suggests that the Norwegian Explorers are, in many respects, typical of Sherlockian scion societies. They are, as are practically all other groups, sincerely interested in the Sherlock Holmes legend and anxious to preserve and extend it. The emphasis on the written adventures, the Sacred Writings, the use of quotations from the Canon—these and other activities suggest a common interest in keeping alive the love of the Master Detective and his ideals of justice, evidence, and truth. The Explorers’ Mission Statement reads:

The Norwegian Explorers of Minnesota, Inc. is a non-profit organization interested in and dedicated to the appreciation and advancement of Sherlock Holmes and his world. In a gray world, we keep the memories of all things Sherlockian forever green. We extend a hand to anyone who enjoys the drama of a good story, the thrill of the chase, and all of the manifestations of Sherlock Holmes throughout the ages.

One of the requests for foundation funds to support the Hench Collection emphasized that a significant part of the project would be the wider dissemination of information about Sherlock Holmes, coupled with a major effort to spread the ideals and promote the Sherlockian attributes of examining the facts, collecting the evidence, and evaluating both critically.
Several quotations from the Canon illustrate these qualities:

Holmes: "Circumstantial evidence is a very tricky thing; it may seem to point very straight to one thing, but if you shift your own point of view a little, you may find it pointing...to something entirely different."

_The Boscombe Valley Mystery_

"Data, data, data, I can't make bricks without clay."

_Copper Beeches_

"It is a capital mistake to theorize before you have all the evidence."

_Study in Scarlet_

Publicizing Holmes’s devotion to truth has been a major activity of the Explorers, often taking precedence over the Canonical rituals and proscriptions. The record of their invitation to all interested in the Master Detective and his works attests to their concern for this broader objective. A complete account of their many gatherings, activities, and publicity to support “the advancement” of Sherlock Holmes and his methods would require a much longer inventory than is possible here.

The publications of the Explorers have, however, taken a slightly different tack than pure exposition of Sherlockian methods. Many of the Explorers’ writings have as their fountainhead of inspiration Ronald Knox’s famous ‘Studies in the Literature of Sherlock Holmes.’ While pursuing pseudoscientific explorations into the Holmesian literature, Explorers have used Holmes’s deductive precepts to produce interesting contributions to the Holmesian mythos. Joseph B. Connors used Holmesian methods to demonstrate that Oxford was the Great Detective’s college. As earlier reported, McDiarmid used canonical references to argue that Holmes did actually retire after the confrontation at Reichenbach. Jack Key and his colleague, Alvin Rodin, studied the medical career of Dr. Doyle
to demonstrate that his career as a doctor was noteworthy. Their research has demonstrated clearly the untruth of the reputed introduction of Dr. Doyle by a presiding officer, “I wonder about the medical career of Dr. Doyle, for at this time I cannot recall a single one of his patients who is still alive.” McDiarmid has also attempted to amend the biased picture of Watson as the bumbling companion, as portrayed by Nigel Bruce.

The continuing but irregular activities of the Norwegian Explorers of Minnesota are available to all who have a sincere interest in the Sacred Writings. There are no membership requirements, and the fees are nominal (currently $10). Any interested person is invited to join, and, for the first or for the hundredth time, to dip into the Canon and “refresh himself (or herself) in a romantic chamber of the heart, in a nostalgic country of the mind, where it is always 1895.”