

# THE SPIRITS OF SHERLOCK HOLMES

ELMER L. ANDERSEN GALLERY  
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AN EXHIBIT  
EXPLORING THE MANY MEANINGS  
OF THE WORD "SPIRITS"  
AND HOW THEY RELATE TO  
SHERLOCK HOLMES  
ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE  
AND THE VICTORIAN ERA

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

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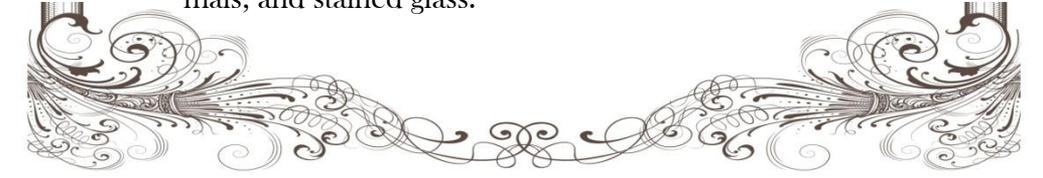


## THE SPIRITS OF SHERLOCK HOLMES

This exhibit is for all who love Sherlock Holmes (or are at least a little curious about the “world’s greatest consulting detective”) and his creator, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. It is a mixture of all (or much) of what Sherlockians find pleasurable, cast around a central theme of “spirits” in whatever form the word might manifest itself: by playing “the great game,” through the enjoyment of drink and dining, by means of the enthusiasm of the collector, in the portrayals of Holmes by various actors, or by way of a belief in Spiritualism (for which Conan Doyle dedicated the latter portion of his life).

In each of the exhibit cases you will find hints of these various wisps of “spirit.” The cases are numbered so that you can navigate your way from one to the next, starting with the first case that features five representations of Holmes by various artists along with the beginnings of Holmes himself: the first story, “A Study in Scarlet,” in *Beeton’s Christmas Annual* from 1887 (a facsimile copy); the first Holmes story to appear in *The Strand Magazine*, “A Scandal in Bohemia” (1891); and a possible beginning of Holmes “scholarship” (or playing “The Great Game”) — sometimes very much tongue-in-cheek and often debated — Monsignor Ronald Knox’s article in the *Oxford Blue Book* (1912) and the later version in *Blackfriars* (1920).

From there the exhibit moves into a bit of whimsy, with Holmes represented through dolls, stuffed animals, and stained glass.

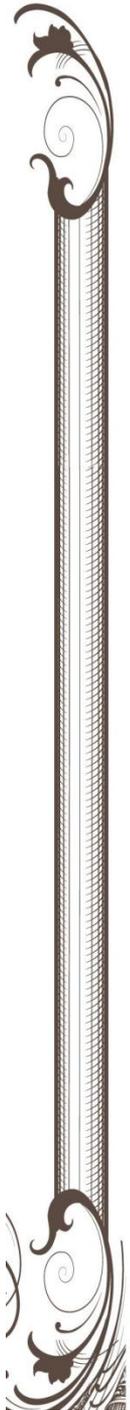


Our first hint of drinking and dining is found in the third case with an assortment of mugs, plates, placemats, coasters, glasses, and menus (not to mention a “Hound” teapot and a tiny cup and saucer). Sprinkled among this mix are additional texts: Ronald Knox’s *Essays in Satire* (1928), the January 1902 issue of *The Cambridge Review* with Frank Sidgwick’s “*The Hound of the Baskervilles at Fault*,” S. C. Roberts’ *A Note on the Watson Problem* (1929) and his *Doctor Watson* (1931). And while we are far from the winter holidays, a Holmes Christmas card is present, reminding us of the good cheer and fellowship of the Holmesian world.

Our drinking and dining is briefly interrupted by a reminder of Holmes the person. Here we see the famous deerstalker hat (in two examples), an Inverness cape, Dr. Watson’s bowler hat, and three walking sticks (two with the likeness of Holmes and one reminding us of his “Final Problem” at the Reichenbach Falls in Switzerland.

The fifth case brings us back to drinking and dining with menus, mug, glass and bottle. We also see one of two Holmes crests and the Great Detective (as depicted by Leslie Ward — aka “Spy” in *Vanity Fair*) looking through the window at 221B Baker Street, along with a sculpture by Warner Chaney.

From there we move to another crest of Holmes, a *Bookman* cartoon of the statue of Holmes being unveiled by G. K. Chesterton, Lillian Colton’s crop art portrayal, a door knocker, ceramic canister, the Parker Brothers “Sherlock Holmes” card game (1904), Charing Cross/Holmes needlepoint, a brandy bottle (much used by Dr. Watson for ailing patients), and Holmes teapot, along with more mugs and menus. Hidden in the celebration is a *Bookman*





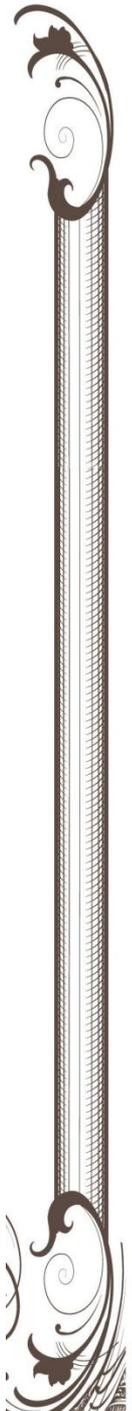
article from 1901, “The Genesis of Sherlock Holmes.”

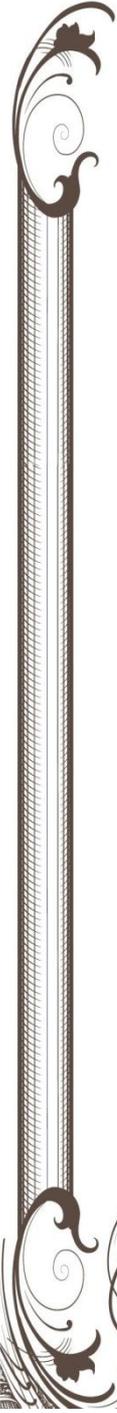
Now we are fully into the spirit of things and continue our play amidst more menus, mugs and artwork. The seventh case features a portrait of Christopher Morley by Chuck Kovacic. Morley, long a part of the literary scene in New York City, founded the Baker Street Irregulars in 1934. A number of his literary works are featured here. The Irregulars are, to most minds, the preeminent Sherlockian organization in the United States. Scion societies, such as the Norwegian Explorers of Minnesota, join in gathering together those with an interest in Holmes and Watson. Other organizations, such as The Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes (ASH) and the Sherlock Holmes Society of London (featured in one of the suspended umbrellas) play an equally important role in the Holmesian world. Other Sherlockian scholarship found in this case — scattered among the letter opener, the Maiwand Jezail bullets, a Reichenbach print, more needlepoint and a pipe — includes *Baker Street Studies* (1934), edited by H. W. Bell; Bell’s *Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson: The Chronology of Their Adventures* (1932); and T.S. Blakeney, *Sherlock Holmes: Fact or Fiction?* (1932). Bracketing the case are two lovely sculptures of Holmes by local artist Lynette Yencho.

Another early Irregular — Vincent Starrett — is featured in the next case, along with companions Dr. Gray Chandler Briggs and Dorothy L. Sayers. Sayers’ *Unpopular Opinions* (1946) is open to the page where her Sherlock Holmes criticism of the early 1930s begins. Starrett’s sonnet “221B” is possibly the best loved of all Sherlockian poetry; it is often read at the conclusion of Sherlockian gatherings. Here you see a handwritten version of the poem along with a

typed version featuring one correction in wording. The case also contains a recording of Holmes tales by Basil Rathbone, the epitome of Holmes on radio and screen (although a later generation might propose Jeremy Brett in his stead). An early issue of *Serpentine Muse*, the journal of The Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes, gives a hint to their activities. Holmes' archrival, Professor Moriarty, is featured in a placemat from a fashionable eating establishment. Holmes, however, has the upper hand, with a nicely placed glass and more menus and mugs.

More Sherlockians are featured in the next to last case. Edgar W. Smith, who followed Morley in leadership of the Irregulars, edited *The Incunabular Sherlock Holmes* (1958); it is open to an article by Arthur Bartlett Maurice, "Some Inconsistencies of Sherlock Holmes," from the January 1902 *Bookman*. Nearby is the first issue of the *Baker Street Journal*, a vehicle for much Irregular scholarship and communication. An early issue of the *Bookman* displays a photograph of the young author Conan Doyle. Robert K. Leavitt's "The Origin of 221B Worship" from the September 1961 *Baker Street Journal* and the *British Medical Journal* of August 11, 1934 with Ivar Gunn's report of the founding Sherlock Holmes Society dinner earlier that year are also seen. Briggs' correspondence with the famed Sherlockian illustrator, Frederic Dorr Steele, along with three London photographs document possible Holmes locales. Perhaps the most curious items in this case are the White House letter and two cards bearing the name of Howard Haycraft. Haycraft, a University of Minnesota graduate and Baker Street Irregular, edited many anthologies of detective fiction, including *The Art of the Mystery Story* (1946), *Fourteen Great Detective Stories* (1949), and *The Haycraft-Queen Definitive Library of Detective*





*Crime Mystery Fiction* (1951). Haycraft received two Edgar awards for his work. The letter and cards document his visit to the White House and another Irregular, Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

The end of our exhibit brings us to the work of Conan Doyle in the cause of Spiritualism. Many of his most important works are featured here. This last stop on our visit, however, reminds us of a few additional “spirits” in the world of Sherlock Holmes. There is the devotion to father, represented in the letter from Doyle’s son, Adrian. Also, there is evidence of the ongoing dedication to Holmes, represented in the various program/presentation brochures of talks given by the beloved John Bennett Shaw, the “Hans Sloane of his age.” And, finally, there are the clocks that remind us of the passage of time and the continuous influence of Holmes through the ages. We hope you have enjoyed this passage through “the spirits of Sherlock Holmes.”

Tim Johnson, Curator

## THE COLLECTIONS

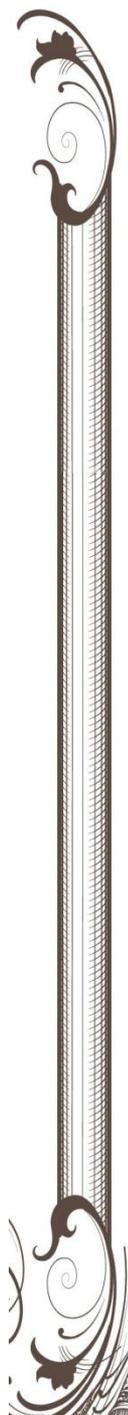
The Sherlock Holmes Collections at the University of Minnesota Libraries constitute the world’s largest gathering of material related to Sherlock Holmes and his creator, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. The Collections consist of over 50,000 items including books, journals, and a wide variety of other items. The Holmes Collections are part of the Special Collections and Rare Books unit of the University of Minnesota Libraries.

The Sherlock Holmes Collections began in 1974 with the purchase of James C. Iraldi’s library of first editions. In 1978, Philip S. Hench, a Mayo Clinic

consulting physician and recipient of the Nobel Prize for medicine (1950), and his wife Mary Kahler Hench, built one of the more remarkable Sherlockian libraries. It consists of approximately 1,800 books and 1,500 issues of periodicals, as well as unique material related to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle; William Gillette, the famous portrayer of Holmes on the stage; and Frederic Dorr Steele, the preeminent American illustrator of the adventures. The Hench collection has been a magnet for other gifts, such as the Frederic Dorr Steele Memorial Collection in 1986, and Edith Meiser's scripts and broadcast recordings in 1987. The library and papers of the late Vincent Starrett were purchased in 1988. Starrett was a prolific author and journalist, a notable bibliophile, and a celebrated Sherlockian. The Howard Haycraft collection, consisting of his working library and papers, came to the University by bequest in 1992. Haycraft wrote *Murder for Pleasure* and edited *The Art of the Mystery Story*, the first comprehensive history and analysis of the detective story. John Bennett Shaw, of Santa Fe, New Mexico, built the largest collection in the world relating to Sherlock Holmes. He began collecting in 1937, at the age of twenty-three, and collected vigorously until his death in 1994. His library, acquired by the University in 1993, holds around 9,000 books; thousands of magazines; photographs, films, recordings, and tapes; art and craft works; toys and games; articles of clothing; and other ephemera. A number of other collections and assemblages of Sherlockiana have been (and continue to be) received by the Libraries.

## EXHIBIT PERSONNEL

Curator: Timothy J. Johnson  
Exhibit Design: Darren Terpstra



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