



Sherlock Holmes

C O L L E C T I O N S



Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Art in the Blood | 1 |
| Housing the History of the Master's Class | 2 |
| The Contents of the Master's Class Archives | 2 |
| A Librarian Enjoys the Sherlock Holmes Collections | 3 |
| A Conference Beyond Expectations | 3 |
| A Study in Sherlock | 4 |
| My Report on "Victorian Secrets and Edwardian Enigmas" | 5 |
| My Name Figures in No Newspaper | 7 |
| Acquisitions | 8 |
| From the President | 8 |
| Ramblings from the Reading Room | 9 |
| Musings | 9 |
| A Tale for Which the World is Now Prepared | 10 |
| Kudos for the Conference | 12 |
| Remembrances | 12 |

"Your merits should be publicly recognized" (STUD)

Victorian Secrets and Edwardian Enigmas

The fourth triennial conference sponsored by the Norwegian Explorers of Minnesota and The Sherlock Holmes Collections at the University of Minnesota was a well-attended and well-received event. The display of objects from the Collections drew many visitors, as well as media coverage. This issue of the newsletter is devoted to the different aspects of the conference.

Art in the Blood

By Jerry Margolin, BSI

This July marked a milestone for me as a Sherlockian and collector of almost 40 years; I was about to attend my very first Sherlock Holmes conference. As my passion for collecting original art is well known, how much better a setting could I have chosen than the University of Minnesota, which houses one of the greatest collections of original Frederic Dorr Steele artwork. This opportunity would not only place me amongst friends and colleagues, but through no lesser connections than Mycroft himself, by previous arrangement with Tim Johnson I would be granted special access to the Steele collection and what is held in this treasure trove.



Thom Boykoff, Bob Coghill,
Jerry Margolin and Tim Johnson

Photo by Stephanie Thomas

I arrived Thursday night and on Friday morning I joined a small group of excited visitors on a tour of the Sherlock Holmes collection, led by Julie McKuras and Tim

Continued on page 10

Housing the History of the Master's Class

by Michael Kean, BSI

The 1970s saw a remarkable resurgence in the worldwide fascination with Sherlock Holmes, and for me, that decade served as the foundation of my involvement in organized Sherlockian activities. Though my interest in Sherlock Holmes had been rekindled in 1967 while attending graduate school, at that time Columbus, Ohio offered no Sherlockian support. All I could do to feed my interest was to watch Basil Rathbone/Nigel Bruce films on late night television and reread my copy of the Canon.

Upon moving to Philadelphia in late 1970, I soon became aware of the existence of The Sons of the Copper Beeches, but when I inquired about attending a meeting, I was told that they had a lengthy waiting list. My interest did not wane, however, and I continued to read, even amassing almost a dozen(!) newly published books (including Baring-Gould's *The Annotated Sherlock Holmes* and his *Sherlock Holmes of Baker Street*, Trevor Hall's *The Late Mr. Sherlock Holmes*, and Arthur Lewis' *The Copper Beeches*).

Then in late 1974 I heard that a new Sherlock Holmes group had just formed, and that all interested parties were welcome. In response to my letter seeking information, I received a facsimile of a late Victorian British telegram inviting me to a meeting of the 70th Reunion Anniversary Dinner of the Priory School, Class of '05, in cooperation with The Master's Class of Philadelphia, on January 12, 1975. This was to be my first exposure to an organized Sherlockian event; and what a magical evening it was!

Though a stranger, I was made to feel most welcome, and by the end of that evening had met numerous individuals who would become long term Sherlockian friends, including Peter Blau, Jon Lellenberg, Ev Herzog, and Steve Rothman. I recall, while at the bar awaiting a drink, being engaged in

conversation with a gregarious, rather portly gentleman.

"Have you ever been to a Sherlock Holmes meeting before?" I asked him.

"A few," he responded, then proceeded to ask me all about myself and my interests, and to make this nervous and excited first-timer feel at ease.

I learned who the gentleman was later that evening when John Bennett Shaw was introduced as the guest speaker. John and I became good friends, and for many years he returned to Philadelphia for the annual Master's Class birthday dinner on the Sunday evening following the Baker Street Irregulars festivities in New York City. Years later, it was I who received a call from Tom Stix informing me of John's death, and asking me to spread the news by contacting selected Sherlockians and the leaders of the West Coast scions.

The Master's Class of Philadelphia was founded by Robert M. Broderick and Norman M. Winokur in 1974. Robert Sammis, Gary Wakshul, and Susan Jewell were also among the original officers of the group. Realizing that Philadelphia could easily accommodate another Sherlockian society, especially one open to women, many members of the Sons of the Copper Beeches (which then, as today, remains an all male scion) helped nurture the fledgling group. Among them were Marv Aronson, Herman Beerman, Sam Feinberg, Jack Koelle, Ben Wolf, and Jim Jewell. As the scion grew and prospered, others who would later become well known in national Sherlockian circles became active members. These included the likes of Bob Katz, Scott and Sherry Rose

Bond, Gideon Hill, Marina Stajic, and Bev Wolov. I became Headmaster Sinister in 1976 and served in that capacity until moving to Chicago five years later.

The Master's Class is a good example of the new-found enthusiasm which permeated the Sherlockian 70s. The Club met four times a year, and the creativity and excitement which characterized those early meetings helped convert many a novice to a devotee! I served as an unofficial repository for the material from the early meetings, and after moving, was accorded emeritus status and continued to receive copies of all of the materials.

When The Masters Class formally dissolved in 1991, we decided that its history should somehow be preserved by some means other than its early members' collective memories. The Sherlock Holmes Collections at the University of Minnesota's Elmer L. Andersen Library was the obvious choice to house our history. I first visited the precursor of the Collection in 1982. At that time the Hensch Collection had been unpacked and was residing on steel shelving, in the process of being catalogued.

When I again visited in 2005, I began to fully appreciate the grandeur of the combined Hensch and Shaw collections, along with the numerous other acquisitions that comprised the treasure trove now known as the Sherlock Holmes Collections.

Equally important to me were the seemingly endless filing cabinets, containing the letters and artifacts that celebrate almost a century of organized Sherlockian activity. (On that visit, Tim Johnson showed me copies of my correspondence with John Bennett Shaw.) To add The Masters Class of Philadelphia's archives will both preserve them in perpetuity, and integrate them into what has become the most significant collection of its type.

The Contents of the Master's Class Archives

Michael Kean described the time he spent "sifting through the accumulation was like a trip down memory lane." The contents, when received at The Sherlock Holmes Collections, were well organized and labeled with the appropriate events. This contribution includes files for:

- Master's Class announcements, programs and assorted flyers for the period of 1982-1991.
- 1975 dinner and summer class
- 1976 dinner and picnic
- 1977 dinner, picnic, and summer and fall meetings
- 1978 dinner, picnic and fall meetings, and the joint meeting with the Fusiliers
- 1979 dinner, spring, summer and fall meetings
- 1980 dinner, spring, summer and fall meetings
- 1981 dinner
- Master's Class certificates for investiture and a list of investitures
- Master's Class song, announcements and handbook



Photo by Connie Kean

Julie McKuras and Mike Kean

A Librarian Enjoys the Sherlock Holmes Collections

By Peggy Perdue

The recent “Victorian Secrets and Edwardian Enigmas” conference was my first opportunity to visit the University of Minnesota’s famous collection of Sherlockiana, something I’ve been looking forward to since becoming curator of the Toronto Public Library’s Arthur Conan Doyle Collection a couple of years ago. As anyone who attended the conference knows, the weekend was a great success. The varied events were all very enjoyable, and the papers (and lingerie) presented were both informative and entertaining. Even so, I think that the tour of the Sherlock Holmes Collections was the real highlight of the weekend for me. The collection was truly impressive, and its cool and cavernous home the sort of surroundings that delight the heart of a rare-book librarian. I must admit that I do covet your collection of Frederic Dorr Steele illustrations and your throng of *Beeton’s Christmas Annuals*. At times this glimpse of the collection seemed to recall the excesses of one of the more opulent eastern sultanates (an impression which was enhanced by the abundance of Persian slippers that were about.)



Photo by Stephanie Thomas

Peggy Perdue

The exhibition, with its “rooms of 221B” theme was a great opportunity to look more closely at one part of these vast holdings. As a card-carrying member of the Mini Tonga Society, I was especially gratified to see Dorothy Shaw’s magnificent Baker Street miniature in person. If only it could inspire me to finally finish my own Sherlockian roombox, which is stuck

in the nearly-but-not-quite finished stage that miniaturists, home renovators, and bibliographers know only too well.

For several members of the Toronto contingent, this was also our first visit to Minneapolis/St. Paul, so these impressions of the conference wouldn’t be complete without mentioning how much we enjoyed the Twin Cities themselves. A packed conference line up didn’t leave a lot of time for sight-seeing, but fortunately for us, Friend and Explorer Philip Bergem was kind enough to take a few of us around town on the day we arrived. We managed to see a quite a bit of Minneapolis that day, including many historic buildings and some imposing new ones, a quirky caravan of tourists on Segways, some things about Mary, and the largest spoon I ever expect to behold. Later on in the weekend, we were also able to fit in a brief visit to St. Paul to see the fortuitously-timed Sherlockian play *Sherlock’s Last Case*. All in all, it was a wonderful first visit, and I’ll look forward to coming back for more in 2010. Congratulations are due to all the conference organizers on a job very well done. ♡

A Conference Beyond Expectations

by Tim Reich

For many attendees, our 2007 conference was their first opportunity to enjoy a full weekend of Sherlockian presentations and meet a wide variety of people. I was among a number of the conference rookies in attendance. Although a member of the Explorers at the time, I passed on the 2004 conference as I thought I was too new to the community of serious Sherlockians. However, this year there were those who did not make my past mistake. Settling in that Friday and looking around the room, it was nice to see a few people who just joined our local group this spring patiently waiting for

the weekend to officially begin.

It is wonderful to have this conference held here in Minneapolis. The close proximity of The Sherlock Holmes Collections at the University of Minnesota is a great asset for us Minnesota locals. But it is this triennial conference that really brings the Collections to life. The energy generated from old friends catching up on what’s new in each others’ lives, mixed with well-delivered presentations heavy on both research and humor, truly makes this a special weekend for all involved.

Without traveling to New York in early January each year, it’s rare for one to be able to attend an event that draws so many major Sherlockians who have produced so much scholarship over the last four decades. Getting to know them and meeting other new people definitely adds to the enjoyment of the weekend. It’s humbling to think we had people come from all over the world to enjoy this conference. I hope they all went home delighted. I’m looking forward to seeing them again in 2010, along with what I hope will be a new group of “first-timers.” ♡

A Study in Sherlock: The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes Course at the University of Minnesota

by Kate Hannah

I am a Ph.D. Candidate and Graduate Instructor at the University of Minnesota. I study 19th-century British literature as a scholar in the field, so this past May session it was my distinct honor and pleasure to propose, design, and teach a course on Sherlock Holmes. In the three-week course, we read some of the best stories in the Canon such as “A Scandal in Bohemia,” “The Red-Headed League,” *The Sign of Four*, and “The Adventure of the Speckled Band.” Many of our class discussions focused on the characterizations of Holmes and Watson, the differences amongst the villains, and placing the stories within their late-Victorian historical and social contexts. We connected our readings to many of the cultural “ephemera” featured in the stories, such as imperialism, gentlemen’s clubs, women’s rights, and what

we came to call “squalid London.” Our nineteen students were diverse in terms of majors and experience with the Canon, but their level of enthusiasm and engagement with the material was consistently high. We watched and discussed several film versions and radio broadcasts of the tales and the students demonstrated and explored their own interests through their writing assignments.

We spent about 1/3 of our time in the course exploring the Sherlock Holmes Collections at the Andersen Library in five group research projects: Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and His Reading Public; Sherlock Holmes Pastiches; The Women of the Sherlock Holmes Canon; Sherlock Holmes and the British Empire; and Sherlock Holmes and Forensic Science. The collections specialist, Tim Johnson, was of

tremendous assistance to the students and me in organizing this project, and for that we were all truly grateful. I was so pleased that these students were able to work with these rare archival materials, an opportunity that is rarely afforded to undergraduates. The course culminated in a celebration and conference on June 7, 2007, where the students presented their research and which a number of local Norwegian Explorers were kind enough to attend. The conference and the course were such tremendous successes and teaching the course with the wonderful material and the spectacular students constituted the highlight of my four years of teaching and studying at the University of Minnesota. I welcome any of your questions and/or comments regarding the course. I can be reached by email at hann0142@umn.edu. ♡

Photo by Pj Doyle



Kate Hannah and Julie McKuras

My Report on “Victorian Secrets and Edwardian Enigmas”

By Michael Dirda

Having accepted the kind invitation to be one of the speakers at “Victorian Secrets and Edwardian Enigmas,” I promptly forgot about the whole thing for many months, figuring that the day would never come. And then, blighting an otherwise pleasant afternoon, Julie McKuras suddenly emailed me, asking what I’d be talking about. Programs were being prepared, events were on the move. Could I at least provide her with a title for my presentation?

Now it’s always stressful to talk at a university conference, even one in which the audience is full of friends. In this case, though, the seeds of a latent anxiety suddenly blossomed luxuriously: I reflected that many of the greatest Sherlockians of our time would be listening to me, among them editors, textual scholars, biographers, critics, publishers, and annotators of Holmes, Watson and Conan Doyle. Longtime members of the BSI would be there, fixing me with their gimlet eyes, probably while sipping gimlets, highballs and manhattans. How could I compete with such authority, such knowledge, such capacity for drink?

But perhaps there was some subject about which I might, just possibly, know more than the people in the audience. It was then that I recalled the copy of *A Case for Langdale Pike*, which I had unearthed a couple of years back in the Wheaton Library Book Sale room. Pike’s collection of “cases” was largely unknown, indeed I doubted whether anyone other than myself was even aware of its existence. In fact, to most readers, Langdale Pike was little more than a paragraph in “The Three Gables,” itself a text of doubtful authenticity. Perhaps I should see what I could find out about this forgotten journalist and his even more forgotten book?

Well, how much of scientific and literary discovery depends on just this kind of serendipity! As I dug around in the historical record, I gradually uncovered more and more about Pike’s background, wide-range of friendships and his all-round cultural importance in late Victorian and Edwardian England (and America). But one matter did puzzle me: How could a man of such brilliance and accomplishment disappear so utterly from history?

But was this, really, so unusual an occurrence? There have been similar instances of loss—and happy rediscovery. I thought of the Boswell journals in a cupboard at Malahide Castle, of the Flashman papers (still being edited), of Sebastian Knight’s fiction, so well pop-

Photo by Timothy Payne



Michael Dirda

ularized by the Russian émigré scholar V. Nabokov, of Herbert Quain’s *The God of the Labyrinth* (subject of an important article by J.L. Borges), of Dr. Gideon Fell’s masterwork on the drinking customs of the Britons, of the novels of X. Trapnel and Nathan Zuckerman. And how much modern poetry—from Enoch Soames to Adam Dalgliesh—might be today unknown were it not for devoted biographers and textual scholars.

So I quickly resolved that I would do for Langdale Pike and his book what the eminent Charles Kinbote, Ph.D. had accomplished in his superbly annotated edition of John Shade’s now

classic poem, “Pale Fire”: I would make the world recognize the greatness of Pike. Holmes and Watson had stood too long in the limelight. The 21st century would belong to Langdale Pike.

Excuse me. I seem to have gotten a little carried away there. But even now I continue to make utterly unparalleled discoveries about Pike, discoveries that will shake the Sherlockian world. Since my talk itself which will be reprinted in a forthcoming issue of *Canadian Holmes* I have continued to turn up new information, most recently about a possible link to a prominent Victorian cricketer and sportsman. I have also learned that Pike’s death, under mysterious circumstances, may have had something to do with folkloric researches he was carrying out for a prominent American university. And just today, as I write, I have learned of an Ambrose Bierce letter to the very young Clark Ashton Smith, in which a reference is made to an L. Pike and his journey to a place, otherwise unfamiliar to me, called “mysterious Kor,” apparently located somewhere in Africa.

It is abundantly obvious that more Pike material is out there, just waiting to be discovered. Indeed, to that end, after the funding from the National Endowment for the Arts comes through, I will be establishing the Langdale Pike Society. More information about membership—with special rates for registered students—will be available on the LPS website (still under construction). Annual dues will include a year’s subscription to the quarterly *Journal of Pike Studies*.

Oh yes, one last item: The previously announced exhibition, “Pike in Paris,” has been moved from the Bibliotheque Nationale to the Musee du Louvre and is now scheduled to open on the 100th anniversary of Pike’s pivotal diplomatic mission to the French capital. Do plan to attend. ♡

Photo by Ben Vizoskie



Dr. Charles Nolte, Curtis Armstrong BSI, Terence Kilburn who portrayed Billy the Page in "The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes"

Photo by Julie McKuras



In the reading room with Donald Petkus, Helen Ailing, Curtis Armstrong (with *The Beeton's Christmas Annual*), Carol and Ron Fish

Photo by Mike McKuras



Bill Mason and Megan McKuras

Photo by Stephanie Thomas



Auctioneer Peter Blau and Gary Thaden at the conference banquet

Photo by Julie McKuras



Conference speakers and attendees

Photo by Stephanie Thomas



Allen Mackler's 221B recreated room on display at the conference

Photo by Julie McKuras



Tim Johnson, Fred Levin (hidden), Sunnie Levin, Marsha Pollack, Mitch and Mayumi Higurashi, Yumiko Shigaki, and Kiyoshi Arai

My Name Figures in No Newspaper

Such may have been the case for the Master during his active years, as he gave his friend and colleague, Dr. Watson, some further insights on the meaning of being “the only unofficial consulting detective.” But with the passage of time, and in his retirement, Holmes’ statement no longer holds. A quick glance at any bibliography or current newspaper index confirms this. The Master has become associated with the Media.

We have no doubt, given the media’s fixation with celebrities, that Holmes prefers the earlier state of affairs. “The work itself, the pleasure of finding a field for my peculiar powers, is my highest reward.” There are times, however, when events congregate in a happy fashion and enlighten or entertain us, providing insights into a world that by its very nature must bring the attention of those who wish to keep us well informed. Such was the case this summer with the concurrent events of the University of Minnesota’s Centennial Showboat theatrical production of *Sherlock’s Last Case*; the triennial conference hosted by the Norwegian Explorers, the Friends of the Sherlock Holmes Collections, and the University Libraries, “Victorian Secrets and Edwardian Enigmas”; and the accompanying exhibit, “The Riddles of the Rooms of 221B Baker Street.” The alignment of three such stars in the Holmesian universe was, indeed, noted by the media. And it was my cheerful task to collaborate with my media colleagues and in the process shine a little more light on the Holmes Collections and on the Master himself.

Our first chance to join forces with the media occurred on June 26. Christopher James, Director of Library Communications, arranged an interview with Jeanette Trompeter, a reporter/news anchor for the local CBS television affiliate, WCCO. Ms. Trompeter’s reporting is featured in a news program segment, “Finding Minnesota,” that uncovers some

of the state’s hidden gems. Here the gems awaiting discovery were the exhibit and theatrical production. Over the course of about three hours Ms. Trompeter and her cameraman filmed the exhibit, interviewed me about the exhibit and the world of Holmes (while seated in the exhibit), and interviewed the actors playing Holmes (Christopher Kehoe) and Watson (Stuart Gates) in the underground caverns—as Holmes and Watson inspected this vast store of knowledge. The final segment appeared three times on television—Sunday evening, July 15, and the following Monday morning and midday news.

Three days after filming the television piece—Friday—Chris Kehoe and I were invited to “The Don Shelby Show” on WCCO radio. Don, who is a long-time news anchor on WCCO television, also has a daily afternoon radio show. Don’s interest in the world of Sherlock Holmes is well-known locally—he is a member of the Norwegian Explorers and assisted E. W. McDiarmid in securing the Edith Meiser Collection for the Libraries. So it seemed very natural that Don took the opportunity to expose his listeners to the world of Holmes and invited them to attend the Showboat production and view the exhibit. Indeed, after both the radio and television interviews aired we noticed more and more visitors to the exhibit. In one case a couple traveled from northern Minnesota to view the exhibit and find out more about the Collections.

Our third encounter with the media occurred at the end of July when *Minnesota Daily* video reporter Steve Kuzj met me in the exhibit and offered another chance to talk about the world of Holmes, the importance of the Collections, and the impact of Allen Mackler’s gift. The *Minnesota Daily* serves the University of Minnesota community. New digital technologies allow stories to travel beyond the local market, so we’ve posted links to each of these stories at

the Collection’s web site: <http://special.lib.umn.edu/rare/holmes.ph tml>. As I write, a fourth story is in preparation, this one for the University of Minnesota’s alumni magazine. It will focus on Allen Mackler’s gift to the Collections.

Allen’s gift was the focus of my “State of the Collections” report at the Friends’ annual meeting held during the conference. His gift brings us within arm’s reach of our goal to fully endow the McDiarmid Curator position. Beyond Allen’s gift—which I also noted in the exhibit guide prepared for the conference—I reported on: Steve Stilwell’s work of making our duplicate materials available for sale, my visit to Savannah (reported in the March newsletter), class presentations and the May term class, Don Shelby’s presentation to the Friends of the Libraries, increasing access to materials in the Collections, the availability of the recently produced radio shows from the Meiser Collection, volunteer activities, visiting researchers, finances, and our partners in the Holmesian/Doylean enterprise. Taken together, this in itself is a great story and evidence of your continuing support and interest in the Collections.

We know, from our reading of the Canon, that there is a least one story “for which the world is not yet prepared.” But here are five stories that we know you will enjoy, which bring to the world some sense of the Master, and which gave us a chance to combine the events of a perfect Sherlockian summer into small vignettes about the Collections. Holmes’ name may not have figured in the newspapers of the day, but it seems clear he plays a part in the hearts and minds of many today. Special thanks to Christopher James, Justin Christy of the Theater Department, and our friends in the media for giving us the chance to tell these stories. ♣

Tim Johnson

Acquisitions

Charles Clifford prepared and donated two t-shirts bearing the logo of the “Victorian Secrets and Edwardian Enigmas” conference, and had one shirt signed by the speakers, and the other by the conference committee.

Mitch Higurashi, BSI, donated ten books, including six volumes of his translations of the Canon into Japanese. He also included his translations of *The Patient's Eyes* by David Pirie, *The Holmes Inheritance* by Brian Freemantle, in two volumes, and *The Holmes Factor* by Brian Freemantle.

Ray Riethmeier donated the 1987 *Trillium*, the literary magazine of Honeoye Falls – Lima Central High School of Honeoye Falls NY. Ray's “The Adventure of the Defective Detective” is featured in the magazine.

Gordon Speck, BSI, donated a copy of the Collector's Anniversary Edition of *The Lost World of Arthur Conan Doyle* by John R. Lavas.

The latest issues of *The Camden House Journal*, *Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press*, *The Whaling News*, *The Pleasant Places of Florida Newsletter*, *The Foolscap Document of the Three Garridebs*, *The Footprints & Lens of the Ribston-Pippins* ♣



Photo by Julie McKuras

Ray Riethmeier and Tim Johnson

From the President

The 2007 Annual Membership Meeting of the Friends of the Sherlock Holmes Collections was held on July 6, 2007 during The “Victorian Secrets and Edwardian Enigmas” Conference. The Friends were welcomed by Elmer L. Andersen Director of Archives and Special Collections Kris Kiesling. Julie McKuras presented the Membership and Newsletter Committee Report. Gary Thaden gave the Nominating Committee's slate of officers and board members. Re-elected were Officers President Dick Sveum, Vice President John Bergquist, Secretary Mike Eckman, Treasurer Tim Johnson and Board Members-at-Large Phil Bergem, Lucy Brusic, Pat Nelson, Julie McKuras, Mike McKuras, Steve Stilwell and Gary Thaden.

The Sigerson Society members were recognized including: John and Inez Bergquist, The Hubbs Family, Allen Mackler, Mary McDiarmid, Mike and Julie McKuras, Tim Johnson and Dick

Sveum. The society is named in honor of the Norwegian Explorer's first leader and Sigerson Dr. McDiarmid. To become a member requires a gift, pledge or bequest of ten thousand dollars. A special appeal was made for E. W. McDiarmid Endowment for Curator of the Sherlock Holmes Collections.



Photo by Mike McKuras

Tim Johnson and Volunteer of the Year Fred Levin

The Bryce L. Crawford, Jr. Award for best article in the Friends Newsletter was awarded to Julie McKuras for her article “A Game of Billy Bones” which appeared in the December 2006 issue of this newsletter. Fred Levin received

the Volunteer of the Year Award and Dr. Paul Martin discussed his friend Allen Mackler and Allen's donation to the Sherlock Holmes Collections. Tim Johnson, in his State of the Collections, reported that the E.W. McDiarmid Curator Endowment has grown by over a million dollars and is within three hundred thousand dollars of the goal. Les Klinger delivered the Keynote Address at the meeting. I'm happy to report that over six thousand dollars was raised with a two day silent auction and a live auction conducted at the banquet by Peter Blau.

After the conference we called a special meeting with Kris Kiesling and Kathy McGill from library development to see what could be done to raise the remaining money as soon as possible in order to create the endowed E.W. McDiarmid Curator. If you would like to contribute money or ideas please contact me. Together we can make the Sherlock Holmes Collections the World Center for the Study and Appreciation of Sherlock Holmes. ♣

Richard J. Sveum, MD, BSI

Ramblings from the Reading Room

By Susan Rice, BSI, with additional lyrics by Mickey Fromkin, BSI

My days of research in the Special Collections at University of Minnesota were filled with such delight that even the horrible news, days after our departure, of the bridge collapse just a few thousand yards away could not entirely dim my happy memories of Minneapolis. Pushing past the distressing newspaper photos and tragic stories, it's a pleasure to bid my thoughts leap back to the peaceful, productive days of research in the Sherlock Holmes Collections.

With all the other convivial participants, I enjoyed every moment of the Victorian Secrets conference, and even thought I glimpsed the flickering form of Langdale Pike silhouetted against the hot orange sunset. Every presentation was illuminating, many even exciting, and it was difficult to reach the last wonderful illustrated talk and

know there were no more to follow. I felt lucky that I didn't have to leave town and end the party, but was about to enjoy the unparalleled feature of the University's Andersen Library: the research collections.

I was seeking anything and everything concerning the Baker Street Irregulars in the 1960s for the archival history volume Peter Blau and I are writing. Because this collection is a great and vast repository of such material, I had enlisted my partner, Mickey Fromkin, to work with me so we could absorb as much as possible in a handful of days. On the first day of our research we were joined by Warren Randall and Joe Moran who were seeking information on Holmesian subjects of their own, and the six-tabled reading room buzzed with Sherlockian conversation. Busts and statues of the Master around the verges gazed at us unsee-

ingly, but one stumpy figure of John Shaw himself seemed to twinkle down on us all. We spotted all four (4!) copies of *Beeton's Christmas Annual* on a rolling bookshelf and realized we were doing our research in a room ennobled by about \$600,000 in bound annuals contained in a mere two inches.

Tim Johnson was professional and generous, and contrived to make the research process as efficient and pleasant as possible. He would descend into the depths of the library's netherworld and return with boxes of correspondence, meeting notices, magazine articles, and photographs. Virtually every item we examined was unique, and without the availability of this collection the history of the BSI would be much reduced. On one occasion I found a mention of an article in *The Armchair Detective* written by John Bennett Shaw, and asked Tim if the

Continued on page 11

Musings

As soon as the 2004 conference "A River Runs by It" ended, planning began on the next symposium. Keeping to our triennial schedule, "Victorian Secrets and Edwardian Enigmas," held July 6 – 8, was the culmination of three years planning. Many thanks go to my co-chair Richard Sveum, and our committee of Phil Bergem, John Bergquist, Pj Doyle, Mike Eckman, Tim Johnson, and Gary Thaden, as well as members of the Norwegian Explorers who stepped in to welcome attendees and help with various aspects of the conference. They are Tim Reich, Tim Payne, Alice Stelling, Art Bergstrom, Ray Riethmeier, Steve Stilwell and Tim Roden.

I thought it would be interesting to get perspectives about the conference from a number of people, and so I asked a few to write articles for this issue; Michael Dirda, as a first time speaker here; Tim

Reich, as a fairly new Sherlockian attending his first conference; Jerry Margolin, as a long-time Sherlockian also attending his first conference and indulging his passion for Sherlockian artwork; Peggy Perdue of the Toronto Public Library, as a librarian having the opportunity to see the "other" great Sherlockian library in North America; Susan Rice and Mickey Fromkin, as conference attendees who extended their stay in Minneapolis in order to do research in the collections; and Jon Lellenberg, whose observation of the display led to the answer to a question.

We can't focus all of our attention on the conference, as life goes on with the Collections. In this issue, we also highlight a new addition to the Collections with the donation of the Master's Class Archives by Michael Kean, and a description of a class, a Study in Sherlock, taught by Kate Hannah.

I was lucky enough to attend the final session of that class and was struck by the contagious enthusiasm that Kate brought to her students. The future for admirers of Sherlock Holmes is bright.

John Bergquist contributes some notes on the conference and media coverage. Tim Johnson focuses on that media coverage, and Dick Sveum covers the annual meeting of the Friends and what has been accomplished during the past year.

I also want to thank all the people who took time to send notes about the conference. We were all pleased to host such a great weekend. As you'll note in the comments compiled by John Bergquist, Don Hobbs has already made plans to return to Minneapolis in three years for the next symposium so we'd better start planning the 2010 event. ♥

Julie McKuras, ASH, BSI

A Tale for Which the World is Now Prepared

By Jon Lellenberg, BSI

Serendipity plays an important role in research, but best when there is a thoughtful and competent Prince of Serendip as well as the researcher — a person who by one means or another creates the opportunity for the researcher to recognize and seize.

During the Minnesota weekend, it was Tim Johnson, and the opportunity he created for me, in his professional capacity, with the display at the Elmer L. Andersen Library. During Saturday morning, following my own and Dan Stashower's presentation about our forthcoming book *Arthur Conan Doyle: A Life in Letters* — a book already enhanced by items in the Sherlock Holmes Collections — I was browsing through the program, and its list of recently acquired A. Conan Doyle correspondence in the display, and my eye lit upon a reference to an undated (1891) letter from Conan Doyle to a Mr. Lawson Tait.

Not a name to conjure Sherlockians with, at least not 'til now, but it got my attention. In fact, my mouth dropped open, I jumped up and ran out of the meeting room to the display, found and stared at the letter, then dashed back into the room and pulled Dan out, in order to enjoy watching him stare open-mouthed at it as well.

Lawson Tait is not a name familiar to readers (or writers) of Conan Doyle biographies. He was a surgeon of considerable significance in Dr. Conan Doyle's day, the man who revolutionized abdominal surgery at a time when few dared attempt it, and Conan Doyle certainly knew who Tait was from his medical student days. But medicine has little to do with Tait's significance to us. One day in October 1890, out of the blue, Conan Doyle in Southsea received a letter from Tait, writing on his own and another eminent Briton's behalf, that filled Conan Doyle with awe. And six months later the memory of it led to the young writer, by then beginning to make a name for himself

as an historical novelist, to give the protagonist of two failed novellas, Mr. Sherlock Holmes of Baker Street, one more chance in short-story form.

It was a discovery we made in one of Conan Doyle's letters to his mother, one never before hinted at in previous accounts of his life. And there, in the Andersen Library display case, was the end of the story, a letter in which Conan Doyle begs for leave to call upon Mr. Lawson Tait, because of the very kind letter he had had from him some time before. We apprised Tim Johnson of the fact that this letter was not the simple request for an appointment it seemed, but an unsuspected piece of literary history, of nothing less than the resurrection of Sherlock Holmes in *The Strand Magazine*.

The facts will be found in our book this autumn; its editors are grateful to Tim and the Elmer L. Andersen Library for helping us toward a satisfactory conclusion to the discovery, a tale for which the world is now prepared. ♡



Photo by Timothy Payne

Dick Sveum and Jon Lellenberg

Art in the Blood... Continued from Page 1

Johnson. To say that the collection is overwhelming would be an understatement of the grandest proportions. One moment, which took place in a small office, stands out in particular. Tim had surrounded us with *Beeton's*, "Younger's," "Younger's" and the grandest of treasures that most in this group had never seen, but my eye wandered over to three large boxes. I had just finished making a statement of some sort to Tim so the group had turned to look at me. As they did so, I lifted the lid off, *I know I wasn't supposed to, but...* I gasped and my eyes went wide, inside the box was a stack several inches thick of original Frederic Dorr Steele drawings once owned by Dr. Phillip Hench. My wide eyed reaction was apparent to everyone, especially those who knew what seeing this art meant to me. I began to lift out the top drawing, *I know I wasn't supposed to, but...* it was a beautiful color drawing of the slaving Hound of the Baskervilles!

I quickly flipped through these incredible drawings that were used in the various issues of *Collier's Weekly Magazine* and was just amazed at what I was able to see. Unfortunately, I had to put the cover back on as we needed to continue with the tour of the archives which is too unbeliev-

able to describe in just a few short paragraphs. My surprise came at the end of the wonderful conference, when Tim allowed me additional time to view the boxes of Steele drawings. In the silence of that room, I was allowed to go through the drawings one by one and see up close how great an artist Mr. Steele was in the way he set the mood and tone for the stories we know and love. The final denouement wound up to be the last drawing I pulled from the box. Buried at the bottom on a cut half sheet of tracing paper was the *original pencil sketch* for the one Steele drawing I kept after selling my other four to Allen Mackler. I was very excited to see how my original came to be formed from the imagination of Mr. Steele. It was a great moment for me among many moments of this conference weekend.

It was also wonderful to see "my" four Steeles on display in the Allen Mackler collection. I am proud to be part of the provenance of those drawings and that the University of Minnesota will forever care for them. My hope is that one day they will be reunited with my Sherlock Holmes art collection so that others, in years to come, will have the same incredible experience I had in viewing the treasures described above. ♡



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Ramblings from the Reading Room... Continued from Page 9

library owned a complete run of that periodical. He told me they did, but didn't have the index. He had left a message for Steve Stilwell, the compiler of the index, to see if he could help locate the article. The next morning Mr. Stilwell himself appeared in the reading room brandishing a copy of the article for me, and a copy of the index for the library.

As Mickey and I explored box after box, hearing in our minds the voices of long-departed friends, we became aware of another researcher on a different track. Andy, a young graduate student from Maryland was working on a report about Log Cabin Republicans, and so we became aware that the Sherlock Holmes collection was not the lone inhabitant of the Andersen Library. Jean Tretter, in charge of the

eponymous Tretter Collection in GLBT [Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender] Studies, even managed to find an overlap: he presented us with a photocopy of the page from "The Gay Book of Days" for January 6th, commemorating The Birthday! Indeed, we hear of Sherlock everywhere. And in the Sherlock Holmes Collections, Sherlock is everywhere. To paraphrase him, let me recommend this collection. ♡

Kudos for the Conference

The recent conference “Victorian Secrets and Edwardian Enigmas” and its accompanying exhibition in the Andersen Library generated quite a bit of publicity locally, including mentions on radio, TV and in newspapers. Also, most of the 130 or so persons who attended events seem to have come away with a good feeling about the conference, the exhibition, the presenters, and the hosts! Here is a survey of reports appearing in local media and a smattering of feedback from attendees:

News Media

In addition to the media coverage that Tim Johnson wrote about in his column, Dr. C. Paul Martin was interviewed by long-time local media personality Charlie Boone on WCCO radio on June 30. Paul discussed the conference and the Twin Cities Book Fair, which was being held that weekend.

Feedback from Conference Attendees

During the course of the recent Minneapolis weekend, we were treated to an eagerly anticipated and informative presentation [by Jon Lellenberg and Dan Stashower] on the forthcoming publication of ACD's letters to his mother (and others).

- *Christopher Roden, Ashcroft, BC, Canada*

... Yes, a fascinating presentation [on ACD's letters], and clearly a book to look forward to. Indeed, all the presentations were enjoyable. The closing one combined scholarship with an unusual fashion show, in Julie McKuras' overview of Victorian underwear (including, of course, some Dressing Gowns).

- *Ruth Berman, Minneapolis*

It played well in Peoria:

... A small town we call “Sherlockiana.” ... can [materialize] anywhere from Dayton, Ohio to New York City. But one of my favorite places to see Sherlockiana, U.S.A. pop up is Minneapolis. ... As a connoisseur of the Minneapolis Sherlockian conference, I have to say that this was their best one ever.

... While one hears one's fellow Sherlockians raving about having celebrities like [book columnist] Michael [Dirda] and actor Curtis Armstrong on the scene, you always wonder about their Sherlockian “street cred.” Sure, they're wonderful in their home turf, but how are they on ours? With both Michael and Curtis at Minneapolis this year, it was a great chance to find out. And guess what? These guys are good. I mean real good. I mean, the kind of good that gives the rest of us every reason to step up our Game.

- *Brad Keefauver, Peoria, IL*

This triennial event, co-sponsored by the Norwegian Explorers of Minnesota and the University of Minnesota, is the gold standard of Sherlockian conferencing. ... I don't know everything I will be doing in 2010, but I know I will be returning for the next Minneapolis Conference.

- *Don Hobbs, Dallas*

John Bergquist, BSI

Remembrances

In supporting the Sherlock Holmes Collections, many donors have made contributions either in honor or in memory of special persons.

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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.