THE BAKER STREET IRREGULARS ARCHIVE AT HOUGHTON LIBRARY

By Peter X. Accardo

“You can file it in our archives, Watson. Some day the true story may be told.”

Sherlock Holmes, “The Adventure of the Retired Colourman”

The death of Harold Bell came as a shock to me,” wrote Vincent Starrett to Edgar W. Smith on September 5th, 1947. “I hope his papers can be acquired for the archives.” Starrett’s wish did not come to pass, however, as the H. W. Bell collection of Sherlockiana was deposited in 1948 in Houghton Library, the principal rare books and manuscripts library at Harvard University, by an anonymous donor to benefit the Speckled Band of Boston, the second scion society of the Baker Street Irregulars. The momentous decision reached in August of 2003 by Michael F. Whelan (“Wiggins”) and William P. Stoneman, Florence Fearrington Librarian of Houghton Library, to deposit the BSI Archive at Houghton Library has at long last united these two great collections, representing a most welcome fulfillment of Starrett’s original wish. It is altogether fitting that Starrett’s letter to Smith, quoted above, is one of the many treasures in the BSI Archive that has now crossed the library’s threshold.

Over the past five years, BSI members worldwide have responded to the call for archival materials that document the history of the BSI, from its memorable inception in 1934 to the present day. The “Added to the Archives” column in this newsletter has listed many significant and

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FROM THE CHAIR by Thomas J. Francis, BSI

The Trust has been the recipient of many generous gifts during the past several months. We have received a considerable quantity of material. Many Sherlockians have gone through their files, digging out correspondence, papers and ephemera and sending it to the Trust. In a number of cases the quantities have run to several cardboard boxes. Trustee Bob Coghill is making his way through the donations with great care. Not every donation has yet made its way to The Houghton Library at Harvard University. This has not impeded scholarship, as arrangements have been made so that uncatalogued material has been provided to scholars who were doing active research. Not all of the material

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interesting donations that have already reached the library's shelves, “for the sake of the trust.” The archives now fill numerous boxes. Their depth and richness is suggested by the diversity of formats represented therein: personal correspondence, financial records, toasts, dinner menus, investitures, books, proofs, scholarly papers, photographs, maps, recordings, CDs, DVDs, and other memorabilia. BSI publications such as The Baker Street Journal, The BSI Archival History Series, The BSI International Series, and The BSI Manuscript Series have also been donated. Not surprisingly some gaps have been identified and every effort will be made to fill them. The Trust continues to look for rare and unique materials that shed new light on the history of the BSI. Even with so auspicious a start, the archive remains a work in progress, formed not by one creator but by many hands. Its fullness and utility will depend on the continued generosity of the Irregulars.

Since 2003 the BSI Trust has convened at the Harvard Faculty Club to discuss the archive and its future on many fronts. For example, Susan Pyzynski, Houghton's Associate Librarian for Technical Services, has been in touch with Ben Vizoskie about archiving digital photographs taken at recent BSI events. Thomas A. Horrocks, Associate Librarian for Collections, is working closely with members of the Trust in planning the library's forthcoming symposium, “Sir Arthur Conan Doyle: A Sesquicentennial Assessment” and in publishing “The Adventure of the Three Students” manuscript, at Harvard since 1925, in the BSI Manuscripts Series. And discussions are now underway between the Trust and library staff about a searchable finding aid for the BSI Archive to be mounted in HOLLIS, Harvard's online catalogue. When completed this finding aid will resemble the one created by Elizabeth Falsey for the Speckled Band collection of Sherlockiana, which can be consulted at:

http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:FHCL.Hough:hou00063.

This project is scheduled to begin in the summer of 2009 to coincide with the library's Doyle celebration. Until then a binder comprised of the original donation sheets created by BSI Trust member and archivist Bob Coghill will be kept at the Houghton Reading Room desk to facilitate access to the as-yet-uncataloged collection.

Rare items from the BSI Archive will be displayed for the first time in “Ever Westward”: Sir Arthur Conan Doyle in American Culture,” an exhibition mounted for Harvard's forthcoming Doyle Sesquicentennial celebration on Thursday, May 7, through Saturday, May 9, 2009. These items will be featured in a case dedicated to the early history of the BSI. Selecting a relatively small number of items from such a trove has proven to be a difficult though not unenviable task.
The exhibition and related programs will run through August 15, 2009.

"The preservation of the past and its records creates the basis for a solid and viable future," noted Chairman Thomas J. Francis in his recent mission statement for the BSI Trust. "Houghton Library is pleased to be in close partnership with the BSI and looks forward to presenting its archive to a new generation of Sherlockians," adds Houghton Library’s Tom Horrocks. “The Irregulars have demonstrated uncommon dedication to the Trust, and the library is honored to be the custodian of their benefactions.” The best measure of their generosity will be the ways in which the archive will be put to use by scholars interested in the history of the BSI, its programs and publications, and the biographies of its distinguished members. Needless to say, the “true story” of this “singular set” will continue to be told.

Vincent Starrett's letter to Edgar W. Smith, dated September 12, 1947
Harvard's Houghton Library to Sponsor Symposium and Exhibition to Celebrate Arthur Conan Doyle's Sesquicentennial in 2009

The year 2009 marks the 150th anniversary of the birth of Arthur Conan Doyle. To celebrate his life and works, Harvard's Houghton Library will host a symposium and mount a major exhibition to honor the man whose enduring contributions to the post-Victorian world include the creation of modern detective fiction and the genre's most famous literary character, Sherlock Holmes. The symposium will be held on Thursday, May 7, through Saturday, May 9, 2009, and will coincide with the opening of a major exhibition at Houghton Library: "Ever Westward: Sir Arthur Conan Doyle in American Culture".

The exhibition, which will run from May 4, through August 15, 2009, will feature rare books, manuscripts, and ephemera from Houghton's collections, the archives of the Baker Street Irregulars, and private collections.

The symposium aims to broaden our understanding of Doyle in light of recent biographical studies to examine the enduring popularity of the Canon and to revisit the non-canonical fiction, historical and social writings; and to witness Doyle's literacy legacy as promoted by literary societies and through teaching. Confirmed speakers, session chairpersons, and participants include Peter X. Accardo, John Bergquist, Peter E. Blau, Giles Constable, John Constable, Thomas Francis, Thomas A. Horrocks, Leslie S. Klinger, Andrew Lycett, Eve Mayer, Julie McKuras, Glen Miranker, Richard Olken, Daniel Posnansky, Constantine Rossakis, Steven Rothman, Charles J. Rzepka, Daniel Stashower, Randall Stock, William P. Stoneman, and Michael Whelan. The conference will conclude with a gala dinner and musical program of Sherlockian songs performed by Henry Boote and W. Scott Monty II, under the direction of Judge Albert M. Rosenblatt and Dr. Julia Carlson Rosenblatt.

Details on symposium registration will be announced this fall, so please check this page periodically.

http://hcl.harvard.edu/libraries/houghton/doyle_symposium.html

A Note from Don Izban, BSI

The July 2008 SBIOS Post featured this editorial by Don Izban about the BSI Trust. With Don's permission, we're reproducing it.

The BSI Archives at Harvard—Why Is This Project Important?

For at least two reasons (apart from the fact that this worthwhile endeavor is an opportunity for you to pay back something to the glorious hobby that serves you so well)

First, presuming the Sherlockian values of those who are part of the past shall always prevail in some way in all of us (a reasonable, possibly irrefutable, premise), we MUST take the time and make the effort to record, preserve, hold close, and refer to the actual works, validated history, and related memorabilia of the likes of Christopher Morley, Elmer Davis, John Bennett Shaw, Vincent Starrett, Edgar W. Smith, et al. In doing so, we learn from what has come before us and subsequently benefit from it. Conversely, if we do not bear witness to our ancestors "grand doings," we will undeniably be the poorer for it — intellectually, and in terms of participating in the wonderful pastime as best we could.

Second, the purpose of the Baker Street Irregulars and ALL Sherlockians, for that matter, is to keep the memory of Sherlock Holmes green. There is no better way to achieve that for ourselves, as well as for non-Sherlockians, than to maintain in one prominent, prestigious, and accessible place an authentic living story of the BSI and other personage devoted to the "Sacred Writings" and to bolster such history with appropriate documentation (correspondence, photographs, informal writings, official papers and other meaningful records — BUT NOT BOOKS, the archives are not intended to be a library.)

Or course, such an archival institution exists now at Harvard University, providing everyone who may be interested in what the study of Sherlock Holmes is all about with an account of accomplishment, BSI style.

Questions? Comments? Want to know how you can support YOUR archives? Don Izban can be reached at 1012 Rene Court, Park Ridge, IL 60068-2068 or by phone at 847-292-1270.
received has been correspondence. For example, we had a
nice package donated by Paul Singleton. Paul wrote an arti-
cle for *The Baker Street Journal* on The Duane Hotel, the
site of the first BSI meeting. He sent his notes, research
materials, floor plans and an old menu. Future scholars will
have this background material available to assist in further
research. Our vital message is that it is more than merely
preserving our history. It is also maintaining scholarly re-
sources in a strong academic setting that makes the work of
The Trust important to future generations of canonical
scholars.

Sherlockians who are not trustees have been doing much of
the work of the Trust. Let me tell you of a just few who are
part of this speckled band:

1) Don Izban and Dorothy Stix are working very hard
tracking down and speaking to BSI members as well as
family and friends of Irregulars who have passed over the
Reichenbach. Our hope is that we can capture as much
material as possible before it becomes lost, thrown away or
otherwise dispatched.

2) Mary Ann Bradley has taken on the responsibility for
our outgoing correspondence. Mary Ann has tracked do-
nations, then created and typed the thank you letters that
have been signed by Glen Miranker, Costa Rossakis, Mike
Whelan or me. As the trustees experienced a changeover in
responsibilities, her un-dying detective work has made cer-
tain that we have been able to identify every gift and thank
all donors.

3) Randall Stock has been instrumental in trying to get our
documentation processes up to date. He created a method
for gift tracking that will make Mary Ann’s job easier in the
future. Randall is in the process of refining and repairing
our website, making sure that everything is current and
there are no broken threads.

4) Ben Vizoskie has been taking pictures during BSI events
for several years, and those photographs will be sent to The
Houghton Library at Harvard University. Resolving the
digital image format questions, as well as planning a suit-
able storage medium for the digital images, the traditional
images and perhaps even spirit photography is much more
complicated than anyone would imagine. Ben has been
working with the Houghton Library to determine how best
to do this to suit both their needs as well as those of the
Trust. It’s an ongoing process, and we’d like to thank Sue
Vizoskie for her assistance as well.

The Trustees are grateful to these people and the many
others not mentioned by name who are working with the
evolving goals of The Trust.

*Tom Francis, BSI*

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**GIFTS TO THE TREASURY**

Kiyoshi Arai

Daniel M. Polvere – contributed his honorarium for his
Sherlockian presentation made at the Lincoln
Town Library

The Trained Cormorants – in memory of Robert Pattrick

Frances George – in memory of Phil Sherman

Margaret Smedegaard – in memory of Paul Smedegaard

Michael Whelan and Mary Ann Bradley – in memory of
Paul Smedegaard

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The BSI Trust welcomes all monetary gifts as well as
material contributions to the archives.

Monetary donations should be sent to:

Leslie S. Klinger, BSI
10866 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 1500
Los Angeles, CA 90024-4357
Tel. (310) 475-1444
Fax (310) 475-2459

If the financial donation is in honor or memory of someone, please indicate
the appropriate name.

If you are passing on a contribution from a third party, please include the
name and address of the donor so that we can acknowledge the donation
with a thank you letter from the BSI Trust.

Questions regarding material contributions to the archives should be
directed to:

Thomas J. Francis, BSI
43 Mann Hill Road
Scituate, MA 02066—2110
Greg Darak, Mike Berdan, Hartley Nathan, Leslie Klinger, Steve Doyle, Ben Vizoskie and Gideon Hill

Michael Whelan and Steve Hockensmith

Peter Blau, Mikel Vause, Michael Homer, Curtis Armstrong, Will Bagley and Michael Whelan

Mikel Vause and Michael Whelan

Henry Boote
"The Contents of the Bag..."

ADDED TO THE ARCHIVES

The following papers were presented at the *A Study in Scarlet* Expedition to The Country of the Saints, August 29 – September 1, 2008. They were also printed in the book *A Tangled Skein, A Companion Volume to The Baker Street Irregulars’ Expedition to The Country of the Saints.*

Will Bagley’s paper, “Violence in the Mormon West.”

Marshall Berdan’s paper “Playing with Dynamite: the Literary Fuse that Led to the Explosion of *A Study in Scarlet.*”

Peter E. Blau’s paper, “*Angels of Darkness Revisited.*”

Henry Boote’s songbook, “*A Study in Scarlet Sing-A-Long.*”

Greg Darak’s paper, “*Angels of Darkness*” and *A Study in Scarlet: — Can they Both Be True?*”


Gideon Hill’s paper, “Mormonism 101.”

Steve Hockensmith’s “Go West, Young Englishman: Arthur Conan Doyle, *A Study in Scarlet* and the Birth of the Western.”

Leslie Klinger’s compilation of the Power Point presentations made by the various speakers at the Salt Lake City *A Study in Scarlet* Expedition to The Country of the Saints, August 29 – September 1, 2008. Also included were the manuscript materials for *A Tangled Skein, A Companion Volume to The Baker Street Irregulars’ Expedition to The Country of the Saints.*

Hartley R. Nathan’s paper “*A Study in Scarlet: Where the Police Failed, Sherlock Holmes Succeeded.*”

Mikel Vause’s paper “Sir Arthur Conan Doyle: The Righter of Wrongs or Exposing the Crimes of the Mormons.”

Ben Vizoskie’s paper, “The Country of the Saints — Fact or Fiction?”

Donald Pollock’s manuscript for “The City of the Saints: Richard F. Burton in Salt Lake City.” Although not presented at the symposium, it was published in the companion volume.

In addition to the above papers:

John Stevens Berry’s booklet “Richard Lesh and the Maiewand Jezails in the 1960’s.”

Robert Brooks’s nine boxes of files and ephemera that belonged to Bob Hahn. This includes notebooks, scrapbooks, and folders.

Ron DeWaal’s boxes of ephemera and files.

Susan Diamond’s correspondence files with Bob Hahn, Dick Lesh and Steve Clarkson.

Bill Hyder’s toast given at the 1997 BSI dinner.

Julie McKuras’s speech and PowerPoint presentation for “I Hear of Sherlock Everywhere...” presented at the Newberry Library, Chicago, on October 4, 2008.

Don Terras’s paper and PowerPoint presentation for “The Sign of Four and Development of Sherlockian Chicago” presented at the Newberry Library, Chicago on October 4, 2008.

If you have a copy of a toast or presentation given at the BSI Dinner or other BSI event, please contact:

Julie McKuras BSI
13512 Granada Ave.
Apple Valley, MN 55124

Or email [at mike9750@aol.com](mailto:at mike9750@aol.com)
The Cardinal Points

We have a number of people to thank for their articles in this issue of the BSI Trust Newsletter. First, Peter Accardo has written a most interesting account of the BSI Trust Archives from the perspective of a Curator. Peter also provided photos of a few of the holdings from the Archives, representative of what Peter noted as “the diversity of formats represented therein: personal correspondence, financial records, toasts, dinner menus, investitures, books, proofs, scholarly papers, photographs, maps, recordings, CDs, DVDs, and other memorabilia.”

Don Izban, who is working with Dorothy Stix in contacting Irregulars, has contributed his editorial about our “glorious hobby” which was previously published in the July 2008 SBIOS Post. Chair Tom Francis has provided an update on the many people working to add items to the Archives.

Please remember to check the website http://hcl.harvard.edu/libraries/houghton/doyle_symposium.html for updates on the upcoming symposium. We hope to see you there.

Julie McKuras, ASH, BSI

About Donations to the Trust

The Trust seeks primary materials about the history of the BSI and the Irregulars. These may consist of correspondence, photographic and audio materials, manuscripts of historical documents, biographical material, newspaper clippings and magazine articles. It can also accept valuable Sherlockian books that may be sold to raise funds for the Trust.

The Trust does not intend to create a collection that duplicates the Sherlock Holmes Collections at the University of Minnesota or the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection of the Toronto Metropolitan Reference Library and so does not actively seek editions of the Canon or scholarly works unless the material has a direct bearing on the history of the BSI or the Irregulars.

The Trust is a 501(c)(3) organization, and contributions are tax-deductible under Section 170 of the Internal Revenue Service Code.

To deduct a non-cash donation of $5,000 or more, the donor must arrange and pay for a qualified appraisal. Contributions of $250 or more will be publicly acknowledged; for non-cash items, however, tax regulations prohibit the Trust from acknowledging the dollar value of the donation in this newsletter or The Baker Street Journal.

The initial step in making a donation is to contact one of the trustees. You can find contact information on the Baker Street Irregulars Trust web site at www.bsitrust.org.

The Trust archive is located in the Houghton Library at Harvard University, in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The archival material may be used by any qualified Sherlockian, subject to the normal rules and regulations of the library.