



## William Morris Society in the United States Newsletter January 1992

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### IN HONOR OF SANDY BERGER

On 27 December the Society honored our member Sanford L. Berger--and his wife, Helen--with a reception held at the Book Club of California in San Francisco. As most readers will know, the Bergers have assembled the most comprehensive Morris collection in private (or even public) hands, a collection which they have time and again made available to scholars and others interested in Morris and his works. It seemed only fitting that their achievement and devotion to Morris should be marked with a special occasion. Despite inclement weather (the first substantial rain in the Bay Area for several months) more than 45 people came to this festive occasion: members of the Morris Society and of the Book Club of California (our co-sponsor), along with numerous friends and relations of the Bergers.

The program began with refreshments and a chance to examine a selective but highly interesting exhibition of a portion of the Berger collection, "William Morris: The Unpublished Works," devoted to the books Morris planned but did not live to publish at the Kelmscott Press. Among the items displayed were drawings by Burne-Jones for "The Story of Cupid and Psyche," and sample pages for the Froissart and the plays of Shakespeare. Jerry Cole, the ex-president of the Book Club of California, then greeted the guests; his remarks were followed by encomia by two distinguished Morris scholars, Norman Kelvin and Peter Stansky. Mark Samuels Lasner then presented Sandy Berger with a gift from the Society, a framed original drawing by May Morris, admitting that it had proved difficult to find something for the man who already had "everything" Morrisian. In response Sandy described an early meeting of the Morris Society ("West Coast branch") at his house in the late 1960s and told anecdotes of his collecting experiences on a trip to London.

### THE 1991 MLA CONVENTION, SAN FRANCISCO

Compared to previous years, the Society's activities at the MLA in San Francisco proved--apart from the Berger fête-- something of a disappointment. This was due, in part, to the new scheduling policies of the MLA itself, in which one session was moved to a time slot actually preceding the beginning of the official convention, and another, the business meeting, was placed at an ungodly hour, 9 a.m. Sunday morning. Other factors (as we noted at the business meeting) were the relative lack of other sessions dealing the Victorian period and a general reduction in attendance due to budget cuts at many universities and colleges. About 23 participants came to hear the first session, "William Morris and Utopia," on Friday afternoon, and a smaller number attended the second group of papers, "William Morris and 'Abroad,'" on Saturday. Sadly, the cash bar and business meeting both attracted fewer than a dozen people. Full details of the papers delivered at the two sessions will appear in the July Newsletter.

A number of topics were discussed at the business meeting, and two important decisions were made. The governing board voted to place our accumulated funds, held by the Society in London, in an interest-bearing bank account, a step which should give us an added financial cushion in future years. We also decided to raise the membership dues, beginning in 1993, with the basic individual membership rising from \$16.00 to \$20.00, and the other rates increased accordingly. Even at \$20.00 the Morris Society is a bargain, among the least expensive organizations of its kind (we know of several which charge \$30.00 or more and publish nothing). In making the increase it was decided to offer membership at a reduced fee (or no fee at all) to those truly unable to afford the \$20.00. This concession is available by explaining your individual circumstances (in writing) to the president or treasurer. The governing board also talked about ways of increasing the Society's membership and obtaining possible tax-exempt status.

Two new members were added to the governing board: Isolde Karen Herbert, of the University of Western Ontario (to be our liaison with the Morris Society of Canada), and Linda Julian, of Furman University. The rest of the board remains the same: Mark Samuels Lasner (president and newsletter writer), Hartley Spatt (treasurer), Mark Burger, Frank Sharp, Florence Boos, Pamela Bracken Wiens, and Charlotte Oberg.

#### PLANS FOR THE 1992 MLA IN NEW YORK

Given the rather sparse turn-out at our sessions and the cash bar, we have decided to have only one panel at the 1992 MLA convention, to be held this year in New York. The topic is "William Morris in North America" and papers dealing with any aspect of the subject are welcomed. Possible areas of interest include: Morris and some aspect of American literature, the decorative arts, and politics; the reception of Morris's work or ideas in America; or Morris's personal connections with Americans. The topic title is specifically worded so that we are not geographically limited to the United States. Proposals of papers should be sent to Mark Samuels Lasner (address and phone number at end of this "Newsletter") no later than 15 February 1992.

Other plans for New York include the usual business meeting and cash bar. We also expect to have at least one, or possibly two, "outside" events, a visit to a library or museum, and a social gathering--suggestions from members are most welcome. As in the past year there will be a program sent to all members, in the hope that those not attending the MLA convention may want to know what's happening.

#### MORRIS IN MIAMI

The centenary of the Kelmscott Press has engendered no fewer than three exhibitions this winter. "William Morris and the Kelmscott Press" took place from 15 November to 15 December 1991 in the Otto Richter library of the University of Miami, Coral Gables, Florida. Organized by our member B. J. Robinson, instructor in English at Miami, it drew primarily on the University's own holdings, to which were added loans from two other members, Mark Samuels Lasner and Pat Fogle. Despite the title, the show contained a number of Morris's pre-Kelmscott works and a group of volumes showing the influence of Morris on other printers and artists at the turn of the century in England and the United States. In her labels (neatly produced in the Golden type and almost certainly to be reprinted in a catalogue) Robinson dealt equally with the socio-political message which lay behind Morris's "typographical adventure" and with the nature of the book designs and methods he developed. Among the highlights were presentation copies of *The Story of Sigurd the Volsung* and *A Tale of the House of the Wolfings*, an original leaf from the Kelmscott Chaucer (displayed with a leaf from a book printed by Caxton), the Kelmscott *Golden Legend*, and books illustrated by Walter Crane.

#### "IN SELF-RESPECT AND DECENT COMFORT": CELEBRATING THE KELMSCOTT CENTENARY AT STANFORD

Concurrent with the show at the Book Club of California, another portion of Sanford and Helen Berger's magnificent collection was on display (1 November 1991 to 5 January 1992) at the Green Library at Stanford University. "In Self-Respect and Decent Comfort"--the title is a quotation from Morris's essay "The Ideal Book"--concentrated on the only Kelmscott book published twice, *The Story of the Glittering Plain*. The exhibition included drawings and proofs for the Golden type, the first piece of paper delivered for use at the Kelmscott Press, proof sheets and variant editions of the first edition, and original drawings and proofs for Walter Crane's illustrations to the second edition (1894). All of these items are described in the handsome catalogue (produced by non-Morrisian means using digital typography), which includes several illustrations and a prefatory note by Peter Stansky.

#### "DESIGNING UTOPIA: THE ART OF WILLIAM MORRIS AND HIS CIRCLE"

The Katonah Museum of Art, Katonah, New York, has scheduled an exhibition entitled "Designing Utopia: The Art of William Morris and his Circle," from 15 February to 12 April 1992. Stephen F. Eisenman, a Morris scholar from Occidental College, Los Angeles, is the curator. The show emphasizes decorative works--wallpapers and original wallpaper blocks, textiles, embroideries, tapestries, furniture, and metalwork--but also incorporates books (including the Kelmscott Chaucer), manuscripts, and drawings. According to the museum, this is the first all-inclusive exhibition in North America of the

original work of William Morris and his circle (Sir Edward Burne-Jones, D. G. Rossetti, W. A. S. Benson, and others), a claim which the Delaware Art Museum might want to dispute. Lenders to the show include the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Delaware Art Museum, the Museum of the Rhode Island School of Design, the Cooper-Hewitt Museum, the Detroit Institute of Arts, as well as private collections and commercial galleries. There will be an illustrated catalogue.

In conjunction with the exhibition, a symposium, "Collaboration and Innovation: The Enduring Legacy of William Morris," will be held on Saturday, 28 March 1992 beginning at 9.30 a. m. (8.45 for coffee and registration). The speakers will be: Mark Samuels Lasner, president of the William Morris Society; Peter Cormack, deputy keeper of the William Morris Gallery; Martin Antonetti, librarian of the Grolier Club; Alicia Craig Faxon, chair of the art department, Simmons College; and Joseph R. Dunlap, former secretary of the William Morris Society. For further information contact: Myrna Clyman, Katonah Museum of Art, Route 22 at Jay Street, Katonah, NY 10536, Tel.: (914) 232-9555.

#### MORE EXHIBITIONS

The Kelmscott Chaucer was one of the 100 rare books and manuscripts included in the Library of Congress's exhibition, "Vision of a Collector: The Lessing J. Rosenwald Collection," marking the centenary of its preeminent benefactor. Rosenwald amassed a comprehensive group of Kelmscott titles and other 19th century material (including a number of Beardsley drawings, some of them now owned by the National Gallery of Art), even though his primary interest was in illustrated books from earlier centuries.

Another Morris title--*The Tale of the Emperor Coustans and of Over Sea*, a copy inscribed to Georgiana Burne-Jones--is among the sixty-odd items in "The English 'Nineties" at the Grolier Club in New York from 22 January to 20 March. The show--drawn entirely from the collection of Mark Samuels Lasner, includes books (mostly "association copies"), drawings, and a few autograph items all produced during the decade by Morris's friends and contemporaries: Beardsley, Beerbohm, Hardy, Gissing, Christina Rossetti, Wilde, Shaw, and Yeats, to name a few. As the exhibition is held in a portion of the Club not regularly open to the public, potential visitors should call ahead to make an arrangement for viewing (the telephone number is [212] 838 6690.)

#### *WILLIAM MORRIS DECOR AND DESIGN*

This new volume, published by Abrams in New York, appears at first glance to be yet another "coffee table" book aimed at the market for things "Victorian." But the many excellent illustrations (140 of them quite decently reproduced in color) are accompanied by a lucid and informative text by Elizabeth Wilhide which comes as a definite surprise. The early portion of the book gives background information on Morris, his life, work (not neglecting his politics), and position within the realm of Nineteenth century interior decoration. For Morrisians there may be too much of a "how to" manner in the chapters on "Decorating with Pattern," "Walls and Finishes," and "Furniture and Furnishings," but for the most part the advice given on using Morris's work in modern interiors is well-considered, covering the range from a few decorative "accents" to the creation of an "authentic" interior for an arts and crafts house. A particularly useful "glossary of patterns" reproduces 58 designs in color, and the book has a bibliography, and a guide to sources (both British and American) for purchasing appropriate items. The Society is also mentioned, for which we are very grateful. In all, "William Morris Decor and Design" should rank as one of the single best current works on the subject, rather a bargain at \$45.00 in this era of steadily-increasing book prices.

#### A SPECIAL OFFER: *THE KELMSCOTT PRESS: A HISTORY OF WILLIAM MORRIS'S TYPOGRAPHICAL ADVENTURE*

A month or so ago all U. S. members of the Morris Society were sent a flyer offering William S. Peterson's new book, *The Kelmscott Press: A History of William Morris's Typographical Adventure*, at a discount. If you did not, and want to purchase a copy for \$76.00 (plus \$3.00 postage) instead of the retail price of \$95.00, contact Mark Samuels Lasner, who will send along a copy of the order form from the University of California Press (note: this offer is only valid in the U. S.). In a very favorable review, published in the 15 December *New York Times Book Review*, Penelope Fitzgerald writes that "The Kelmscott Press" has assembled all the known information about Morris's printing in "the clearest, most readable, most scholarly form that anyone could ask for," noting that "At every turn Mr. Peterson's attitude is courteous and sympathetic, above all to Morris himself. Indeed, Morris and Mr. Peterson

seem to be in a kind of partnership, interpreting together Morris's genius and his shortcomings." This is high and deserved praise for a book which should be on the shelves of all Morrisians and all interested in the history of the book.

#### THE TENNYSON CENTENARY: CONFERENCES

1992 marks the centenary of the death of Tennyson and three groups, one in England and two in the United States, have announced plans for conferences in his honor.

The first of these--chronologically speaking--"Tennyson 1892-1992: An International Conference," organized by the Tennyson Society and the Adult Education program at the University of Nottingham, is scheduled for 24-27 July in Lincoln, England. The site is Bishop Grosseteste College, a teacher training college within 10 minutes walk of Lincoln Cathedral and the Public Library, home of the largest Tennyson collection in the world. The director of the conference is Professor Norman Page of the University of Nottingham and the organizer is Peter Preston, also from the same institution (Society members will recognize Mr. Preston as the editor of the British Newsletter). In addition to four panels of scholarly papers the conference features visits to Tennyson-related places in the Lincoln area and to the Tennyson exhibition at the Usher Art Gallery. The keynote speakers are Robert Bernard Martin, Christopher Ricks, and Marion Shaw, all well-known Tennyson scholars. For information write to: Department of Adult Education, Residential Courses Unit, 14 Shakespeare Street, Nottingham NG1 4FJ England.

"Tennyson 2000: Rethinking and Reappraisal," the annual meeting of the Victorians Institute, will be held 2-3 October 1992 at the College of Charleston, South Carolina. The Institute welcomes 10-page papers on any aspect of Tennyson. Papers exploring new critical theory, interdisciplinary approaches, and comparative literature treatments will receive special attention. Papers should be submitted by 1 July 1992, and proposals for papers and session topics go to the program chair: Denis Goldsberry, Department of English, College of Charleston, Charleston, SC 29424, Tel.: (803) 792-5664.

Also in the United States, "Tennyson 92: Prospect and Retrospect" is the title for the Victorian Poetry conference scheduled for 13-15 November 1992 at West Virginia University. The journal *Victorian Poetry* and the Department of English invite submissions of papers of 10 to 12 pages concerning any aspect of Tennyson. Papers marking new directions in Tennyson studies will be especially welcome. The deadline for submissions is 1 August 1992 and all inquiries go to: Hayden Ward, Department of English, 230 Broadway Hall, West Virginia University, Morgantown, WV 26506, Tel. : (304) 293-3107/3100.

The question arises: what about Morris in 1996?

#### BEGINNING ANEW; THE JOURNAL OF PRE-RAPHAELITE STUDIES

As noted in a past Newsletter, the *Journal of Pre-Raphaelite Studies*, founded more than a decade ago by Francis Golfing and lately published by the University of British Columbia, has now been transferred into new hands. Julie Codell, of Arizona State University, has been joined by Judy Kennedy, of Kutztown State University, and the two editors have assembled a group of helpers: Debra Mancoff as art history editor; Florence Boos as literature editor; and Susan Casteras as exhibition reviews editor. They are also forming an augmented advisory board. Because of the hiatus in publication (the next issue is scheduled to appear this Spring) there is a real need for both subscriptions and new contributions (particularly book reviews--ask first before submitting). A future issue will deal with the subject of the Pre-Raphaelites and Japan. Individual subscriptions are \$25 per year, with institutions paying \$40. All orders and communications go to Professor Codell at the School of Art, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ 85287.

#### PENKILL FOUNDATION

The "Penkill Foundation" has recently come to our attention. Some years ago an American, Elton A. Eckstrand, became the Laird of Penkill by purchasing Penkill Castle, in Ayrshire, Scotland, a site of many Pre-Raphaelite associations, at one time the home of Alice Boyd, William Bell Scott's lover and the friend of the Rossettis and Swinburne. Now Mr. Eckstrand has renovated the Castle and started a foundation to publicize it. A recent issue of its newsletter, "The Order of the Owl," contained an article "Pilgrimage to Penkill" by the Pre-Raphaelite scholars Jan Marsh and Liz Woods and the news that a book will be issued detailing the history of Penkill based on newly discovered papers. We are not sure of

the tax-exempt status of the "Foundation" or how much it costs to join, but the address is 18430 Mack Avenue, Detroit, MI 48236.

#### THE MORRIS CIRCLE IN RECENT NEWSPAPERS

"Jane Morris Likes Being a Waitress, as Long as It's an Act" was a headline in the "Arts and Leisure" section of the *New York Times* for Sunday, 27 October. Apparently this Jane Morris is not "our" Jane, but a film star. The illustration and query at left appeared as the "Book Bag" question in the Sunday, 29 December issue of the "Washington Post Book World." The first correct entry brought the winner a cloth "book bag" emblazoned with the newspaper's name. It should be noted that part of the information supplied in the text is incorrect: the book referred to, *Goblin Market and other Poems* (1862), was not Christina Rossetti's "first book," which was actually the *Verses* of 1847.

#### NEWS OF MEMBERS

On 14 December William S. Peterson spoke about his book, *The Kelmscott Press*, at Chapters Bookstore in Washington, D. C. More than thirty people attended what proved to be an interesting (and amusing) account of Peterson's research and writing a work which, he admitted, took him a lot longer than he expected and produced two offshoots--the bibliography of the Kelmscott Press, published in 1984, and an edition of Morris's writings on the book (1982). In November Professor Peterson gave two lectures at Stanford University associated with the exhibition of material from the Berger collection, "In Self-Respect and Decent Comfort," described elsewhere in this Newsletter.

Florence Boos continues to emulate Morris in her all-encompassing activity. Newly appointed the literary editor of the *Journal of Pre-Raphaelite Studies*, she is also editing a special issue of *Victorian Poetry* for the Morris centenary in 1996, at the same time working on her multi-volume edition of Morris's poetry, contracted for publication by the University Press of Virginia.

Our members Sanford L. Berger, Fay M. Blake, and Martin Newman attended the "Kelmscott Press Day" at Kelmscott House on 12 October 1991.

Cynthia Bartholomew (195 West 200 North, Logan, UT 84321) is eager to purchase two books which appear to be unavailable in this country: Jan Marsh's *The Pre-Raphaelite Sisterhood* and the same author's *Jane and May Morris: A Biographical Story 1839-1938*. If you know of copies for sale please let her know.

#### A SHOPPING GUIDE TO MORRIS IN THE UNITED STATES

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston  
Catalogue Sales Department  
P. O. Box 1044  
Boston, MA  
02120-0900  
(800) 225-5592

A recent "gift catalogue" offered a new series of "William Morris Tapestry Bags": cloth bags with leather trim with pattern based on a Morris design. Four sizes, all in blue, a tote bag, cosmetic case, checkbook, and satchel, ranging in price for \$20.00 to \$99.00.

Metropolitan Museum of Art  
Special service office  
Middle Village, NY 11381  
(800) 468-7386

A recent Metropolitan Museum of Art catalogue featured "William Morris Patterns," a box of 24 notecards, priced at \$9.95.

Past Times  
Wootton Business Park  
Abingdon  
Oxfordshire OX13 6LG  
England

(800) 621-6020

This British mail order firm (note the direct-dial U. S. toll-free number) offers a number of Morris-related items: the Compton scarf (designed by J. H. Dearle); the Arcadia frame (decorated with a design taken from a wallpaper by May Morris); a purse and keyholder in the Compton pattern with leather trim; the Morris cardigan sweater; two sizes of "William Morris Bags" reproducing the Lodden chintz. The most attractive item is the silver initial brooch, based on ornaments Morris designed for the Kelmscott Press--all letters are available except Q, U, X, and Z (\$27.50).

Yale Center for British Art  
Museum shop  
1080 Chapel Street  
Box 2120, Yale Station  
New Haven, CT 06520

The shop has a number of Morris and Pre-Raphaelite items, most notably what is perhaps the largest quantity of books on these subjects to be found in any commercial bookshop in the United States. The stock includes the Center's own prize-winning exhibition catalogue, "Pocket Cathedrals: Pre-Raphaelite Book Illustration." There's also a handsome silver pin (made in England) based on a Morris floral design.

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