

# Sanford Lionel Berger

## Linda Parry

Sanford (Sandy) Berger was a collector and Morris scholar of many fine qualities, the greatest of which were generosity, humanity, humour and friendship.

An architect by profession, Sandy Berger graduated from the University of California at Berkeley, and worked for the Californian firm of Stone, Marraccini & Paterson, becoming, in time, Director and Senior Vice President. There he was responsible for designing many public buildings including hospitals. This satisfied his deep-seated interest in people and provided the perfect vehicle for a man with a meticulous but very practical attitude towards everything he undertook. Outside the practice he was a keen and enthusiastic printer and a book collector of note, a member of the Book Club of America (President from 1983 to 1985) and Master of the Press of the Roxburghe Club of San Francisco. However, he was also well-known outside book circles and the Morris collection that he and Helen, his wife, amassed first at their homes in the Berkeley Hills and later in Carmel, California was the most important of its kind.

Following his retirement, Sandy worked tirelessly on the collection in the lower rooms of the Bergers's house overlooking the Pacific in Carmel. It was extensive and included a comprehensive Morris library, important early designs and proofs from the Kelmscott Press and a full set of the Press's publications, many of which were autographed. Records from the firms of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co., and Morris and Co., ranged from a set of early Morris figure drawings, the minute book of the firm, the Merton Abbey printed cotton dye ledger, early important stained glass designs and full records of stained glass production from the late 1870s. Many of the items relating to the work of the two Morris firms were acquired in one group by the San Francisco dealer David Magee in the late 1960s, but Sandy and Helen continued to add to the collection for a further thirty years. Later additions included a full stained-glass window (which, although too large to be seen in its original configuration, graced various windows of the house in Carmel), textiles samples, a rug and a large collection of autographed letters and ephemera relating to Morris and his Circle.

Sandy was a keen and active member of the William Morris Society and he and Helen frequently timed their annual trips to Europe to coincide with the Society's events in London. This provided an opportunity to meet old friends and further indulge Sandy's enthusiasm for Morris. He was equally enthusiastic and welcoming to whoever asked to see the collection. My own initial experience was as a young curator who cheekily wrote to say I had a couple of hours free in San Francisco and hoped to meet him and study some items, unaware that the collection was kept in Carmel some distance away. I found on my arrival at his apartment that he had brought three large suitcases full of textile-related objects to San Francisco especially for me to see. Not only this but he insisted on treating me to lunch which was a kind, fatherly gesture for an impoverished traveller. That afternoon was one of the most intriguing and enjoyable of my career talking to

him and developing ideas for my own future research. Subsequent meetings (whether in London or Carmel) have sparked new initiatives. Without Sandy and Helen's enthusiasm and enormous generosity many projects and publications, including the Victoria and Albert Museum's 1996 William Morris exhibition, would not have materialised.

Sandy Berger died on 30 July 2000 at the age of eighty-one. He is survived by Helen and their three sons. Shortly before his death the Morris collection was sold to Huntingdon Library in San Marino where, once it is fully catalogued, it will be available for study. This will provide a fitting tribute to the collector but sadly future scholarship will not have the benefit of Sandy Berger's guidance and good council.