



Plugs & Dottles

Official Newsletter of the Nashville Scholars
of the Three Pipe Problem
2nd Quarter Summer Issue 2022
Jim Hawkins & Dean Richardson, Co-Editors

- Established 1979
- Meetings on 3rd Saturday of the month
- [Website](#)
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The ever-popular Sherlockian symposium speaker, our own Bill Mason, was among the conference speakers in Dayton, OH, at the “Holmes, Doyle, and Friends Conference,” March 11–12.

Dean Richardson, who also attended the meeting, has an in-depth account of the event on page 2 of this issue of *Plugs & Dottles*.

See the story on page 7.



TRIPLE J
CATTLE CO

At Last: A Scion Pin for the Nashville Scholars



3PP pin designed by Jim Hawkins

Charter member Gael Stahl made the Scholars “an offer we couldn’t refuse.” Jim Hawkins contacted The Pin People in New Jersey and negotiated a price for 100 pins, obviously more than our membership numbers, but trusting that friends in other scions would want a pin for their collection. So, for 100 pins, the minimum for the style and size we ordered, The Pin People gave us a flat rate, including shipping, of \$350. Stahl and Hawkins agreed that the price, for the quality of the pin, was a good deal. Stahl contributed \$300, and Hawkins chipped in \$50. We are charging \$10 each for members, and \$15 for non-members. The money will go toward our general fund, to pay for our website at Squarespace and other items that arise in running an organization like ours. We are pleased how the entire project came out, and we encourage members and nonmembers to contact us to get this unique societal pin.

The new Nashville Scholars pin will be available at our Pot-Luck Picnic at noon July 16 at the home of Gael and Susan Stahl. Members, bring \$10. One lucky attendee will win one in a little contest we are “cooking up.”

Holmes, Doyle, and Friends Conference, March 11–12, 2022

A Report by Dean Richardson

March 11 is nine days away from spring, but you couldn't tell that as Bill Mason drove and I road through snow showers as we approached the Clayton Airport Inn in Englewood outside Dayton, Ohio. The last gasp of winter threatened to impair the latest conference of Holmes, Doyle, and Friends, sponsored by the Agra Treasurers of Dayton, but Sherlockians are hardy souls (especially those living in northern climes), and attendance was not much affected by the weather.

The pandemic prevented them (as it did most things) from holding a conference the last two years, but they more than compensated for that this time with a strong program of speakers and events. That Friday evening (the 11th) a welcome reception packed a room with cold but warmly friendly (and hungry) people who enjoyed being together again and talking over things Sherlockian and mundane for a couple of hours, by which time the snow had ceased without affecting much beyond the rooftops and grass. Streets were clear and remained so throughout the weekend.

Saturday morning, after a welcome from Lorraine Reibert, Chief Constable, and Ann Siefker, Chancellor of the Exchequer, the program began with a rousing presentation by our own Bill Mason (BSI) on the topic, "Conan Doyle on Trial: The Murder of Sherlock Holmes" (retitled for the con, "Regina vs. Arthur Conan Doyle, M.D., upon a Charge of the Willful Murder of Sherlock Holmes"). The ground rules were that the time frame was prior to "The Empty House," and as far as the court and public were concerned, Sherlock Holmes was definitely dead. With much humor and several digressions, Bill laid out the ways in which ACD could be charged (guilty; guilty but insane; not guilty) and all of his possible motives and justifications. Then Bill allowed the conference attendees to vote on a verdict and a motive. He tabulated and reported the results. While the presentation was somewhat interactive, I think it would make an excellent article with slight modifications, and I'd love to have that more permanent form.

The next speaker, Rich Krisciunas, is a retired trial lawyer, and he addressed a similar issue: "Could the Crown Convict Sherlock Holmes?" He made a lively examination of the events in "Charles Augustus Milverton," concluding that while Sherlock did bend the law (inadvertently enabling the killing of CAM and then destroying blackmail letters), there probably was not enough hard evidence to justify a jury trial.

Regina Stinson (BSI) related the origins and history of the use of the deerstalker in images of the Great Detective (such that it was a major element in evoking him), despite the fact that it is never mentioned by Watson in any of the stories. (One story does refer to a cap with ear flaps.) Many classic (and some awful) illustrations accompanied her presentation.

After a break for lunch, Mike McSwiggin (BSI) opened the section of "Friends" with a discussion of "Solar Pons: A Bridge of Light." The creation of young August Derleth in the late 1920s, with ACD's permission, Pons is a sort of Sherlock clone, and the pastiches use many of the elements of the canon (Dr. Lyndon Parker as his companion and chronicler, Mrs. Johnson as

his landlady, etc.), but moved forward in time to the 1920s and '30s. While Derleth was an American who never ventured far from his Wisconsin home, he managed to capture much of the spirit and fun of his source material. What happened to his stories after his death is equally interesting.

Ira Matetsky (BSI) spoke on “Rex Stout and Sherlock Holmes.” Stout, author of the Nero Wolfe mysteries, was strongly influenced by the canon, but he had a rather rocky relationship with the Baker Street Irregulars. Matetsky, who bears a striking resemblance to descriptions of Wolfe, regaled us with stories of Stout’s unorthodox teasing of the Irregulars with presentations such as “Was Watson a Woman?” (he “proved” the affirmative response). Matetsky is president of the Wolfe Pack, the society devoted to the study of Rex Stout’s work.

Maureen Mascha, an academic statistician, analyzed the types and treatment of “Women in the Canon.” She demonstrated with charts the relative numbers of positive and negative portrayals, and she discussed the attitudes of Victorians in general and Conan Doyle in particular toward women. She considered how his life experiences, especially his wife’s illness, affected his views on women’s rights and on divorce. Overall, he comes across as relatively progressive, at least in his earlier years.

The final speaker, Lise Sherwood-Fabre, gave a lively talk on “The Truth about Opium Dens.” After describing several literary representations (“The Man with the Twisted Lip,” Dickens’s *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, and Oscar Wilde’s *Portrait of Dorian Grey*), she showed contrasting reports of journalistic and government documents of the time. She concluded that while the public image of opium dens was that they were widespread, dirty, decadent places that were the product of Asian immigrants and frequented by the lower classes, in fact there were few, they were relatively clean, and they were considered minor indiscretions when indulged by members of the upper class. Further, they were perpetuated by the British government because they were profitable. (The opium wars were actually an attempt by China to keep the British Empire from exporting opium into China, rather than the other way around.)

After another break, the conference concluded with dinner at Company 7 BBQ. There were toasts to the usual suspects (Holmes, Watson, Mrs. Hudson, Conan Doyle) followed by food and fellowship. It was a fitting finish to a wonderful conference characterized by top-notch presentations and dealers’ tables with way too many tempting goodies. My only complaint is that my facial muscles were weary from smiling so much. I hope to recover in time for next year’s conference.

More essays and book reviews by Dean Richardson are found [here on the website](#).



**Summer Picnic Pot-Luck is July 16 at noon
at the Stahl residence on Old Hickory Lake.**

The timeline of the Nashville Scholars begins with its founding in 1979 by John Shanks, and we still have charter members who attend meetings regularly. Four of those persons were mentioned in our previous newsletter, the issue for January/February/March 2022. The roles Gael Stahl and Kay Blocker played in keeping the group together will always be remembered.

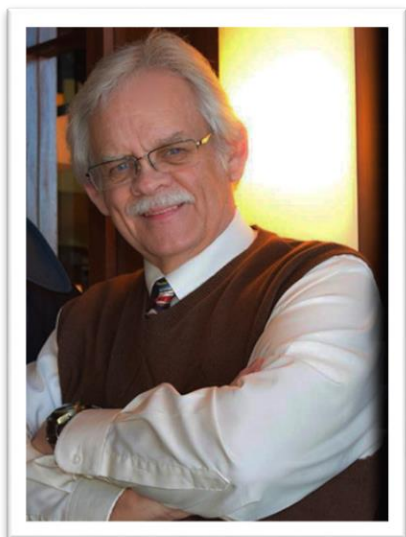
We still have some gaps in the story from the early 1980s, but individuals came along who added depth and energy to the group and were responsible for its growth. One of those who stepped in to bring structure and organization to the Scholars was **Mary-Margarette Jordon**, known in the club as “Gipsy.”

As a young lady, Mary-Margarette was a flight attendant for American Airlines. Later her career path led her into nursing, and ultimately she became the Assistant Director of Nursing at Vanderbilt Medical Center. (See [Remembered Members Page](#).)

In our meetings Mary-Margarette kept order; she ruled with authority. Knowing that she was a flight attendant helps us understand where that authority came from. If a member interrupted another or started a conversation that drew attention from the speaker, you could count on “Gipsy” stepping in and restoring order. We truly miss her.



M.-M. Jordon (1936–2015)



Jim Hawkins

Just one year later Jim Hawkins came to Nashville from Norman, OK, to begin his work as a music consultant with the Baptist Sunday School Board. As a Sherlockian who had founded the Norman Neruda scion society in Norman in 1984, Hawkins was keen to find a scion society in his new city. Strange as it may seem, he learned of the Nashville Scholars from his Sherlockian friend and mentor, John Bennett Shaw in Santa Fe, NM.

John wrote a letter of recommendation to Vickie Smith in which he said, “I have a friend who is a devoted Sherlockian and he would welcome a Sherlockian Scion. He is a top Baptist Musical (sic) person and travels a considerable part of the time – he has been here twice. You may of course tell him I suggested (the) contact.”

Soon after Hawkins became a Nashville Scholar in 1987, a Kentucky Colonel by the name of **Billy Fields** joined the group and became the official convenor for our group. His leadership qualities were obvious, and he has a personality that says, “I like you; we can be friends.” Billy and I often attended the January Sherlockian events in New York City, and the gathering Sherlockians from around the world soon fell in love with Billy Fields. He is our most popular Scholar wherever we go.

For this issue of P&D I asked Mr. Fields to supply us with a brief bio that covers his incredible career with the Metro Government of Nashville. We are extremely proud to count Billy Fields as a personal friend and as an exceptionally important member of our scion society.

Here is his story—his professional resume.

During his more than 30-year career with Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County, Billy Fields has covered a lot of territory through a variety of assignments.

"Billy the Kid"



Fields has served on the staff of the Nashville Mayors since 1987, beginning with Bill Boner, and including Phil Bredesen, Bill Purcell, Karl Dean, Megan Barry, David Briley and John Cooper. The roles ranged from Special Assistant to the Mayor to Director of the Office Neighborhoods, to Coordinator of the Mayor’s New American Advisory Committee to director of disaster relief for tornadoes in 1998 and floods in 2010.

In Metropolitan Government Departmental roles, Fields has served in Codes and Building Safety, Juvenile Court, Public Works and Transportation. In addition, Fields

served as the district administrator and press secretary in the Fifth District United States Congressional Office from 1986 until 1988. Before joining government, Fields served as Director of News and Information at Kentucky Wesleyan College and as a writer for the *Clarksville Leaf-Chronicle*, as well as editor of the *Robertson Herald* newspaper in Springfield, Tennessee.

In the Nashville community, Fields is active as the founding chair of the Board of the Neighborhoods Resource Center and is Chair Emeritus of the Nashville Neighborhood Alliance. He has served as a board member of several neighborhood associations. He is a community volunteer for the YMCA, Boy Scouts of America, the Community Foundation, and the Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce, as well as other civic groups including the American Cancer Society and Rebuild Together Nashville. He is an alumnus of Leadership Nashville.

Politics has been a part his life since his youth Goodlettsville working on campaigns for all levels of office from city councils to Mayors to Governors and even Presidents. Fields is Chairman Emeritus of the Davidson County Democratic Party.

Fields is a graduate of Goodlettsville High School, Volunteer State Community College and holds a bachelor's degree from Austin Peay State University as well as master's degree from Western Kentucky University.

A native of Goodlettsville, Fields was a fixture in Historic East Nashville where he served in various leadership roles including Chair of the East Nashville Caucus, a neighborhood activist organization. He also was a founding member and later Chair of the East (Nashville) Area Business Council.



Donna and Billy Fields

In 2018, he and his wife Donna moved to Wilder Mountain on the Cumberland Plateau where she is raising hundreds of pounds of vegetables for Meals on Wheels for their church. The Fieldses, who were married in 1982, attend Connell Memorial United Methodist Church, where he has taught Sunday school for more than 30 years. In addition, Fields serves on the Advisory Board and is a mission's coordinator for Aldersgate Renewal Ministries, an agency of the United Methodist Church.



Fields and Johnson

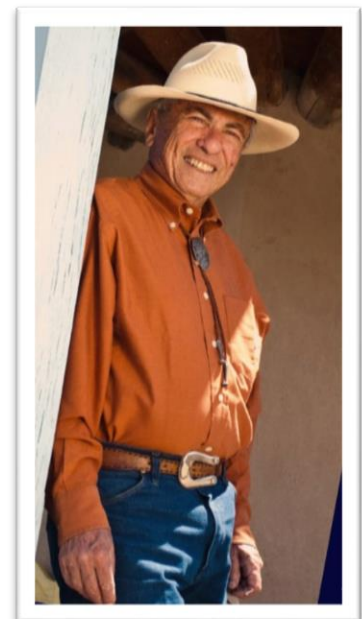
Fields stills finds time to enjoy his Sherlockian Friends as a member of the Nashville Scholars of the Three Pipe Problem and the Nashville Fresh Rashers. (Here he is in New York at the annual January Sherlock Holmes Weekend with Roger Johnson from the Sherlock Holmes Society of London.)

Passing the PIN: A Unique Keepsake and a Most Generous Gesture by Jim Hawkins

I designed and built a [website](#) in 2018 for my Sherlockian mentor, John Bennett Shaw, a man I knew from 1986 to 1994, the year of his passing in Santa Fe, NM. He became a Baker Street Irregular in 1965 and was designated as the “Simpson,” the person responsible for reaching out to the membership and helping new Sherlockians organize their local scion societies. John retired to Santa Fe with a plan: to become active in the civic and literary life of the city and to create a new Sherlockian society in New Mexico.

About the same time John moved from Tulsa to Santa Fe, **Saul Cohen** moved from Los Angeles to this fabled area to get away from the breathless pace of Hollywood where he had been a successful attorney to the rich and famous. In a relatively short span of time Saul and his wife Anne-Lise became close friends with John and Dorothy Rowe Shaw.

Shaw made plans long before he moved to Santa Fe to create a Sherlockian scion society around the village of Moriarty—58 miles south of his new home on Fort Union Drive. He persuaded Cohen to join the effort in creating the B3M—the *Brothers 3 of Moriarty*. They had a great time being the instigators of much of the tomfoolery that was part and parcel of this new group.



Saul Cohen

Later, Cohen represented Conan Doyle’s daughter, Dame Jean Conan Doyle, protecting her literary rights in the U.S. until her death in 1997. But that was business; back to B3M.

Soon after the Brothers 3 became a reality, Shaw and Cohen decided they needed a proper lapel pin to define the scion. John decided to use the letter “J,” representing the names of the three Moriarty brothers, all mentioned in the canon: James, James, and James. As Shaw was quick to point out, one of them, Professor James Moriarty, was “crooked” (evil). He was the arch enemy of Sherlock Holmes and responsible for all the crime in London.

It just so happened that one of the B3M members, **Bill Dunning**, was a reporter for the *Santa Fe New Mexican* newspaper. He had reported the public announcement of the formation of Shaw’s Brothers 3 of Moriarty, on February 28, 1971. And Bill came up with the solution to the problem of the pin design. He had seen a cattle brand in Texas that stood for the Triple J Cattle Company. Three J’s, get it? And the final touch to the brand was to make the middle “J” crooked.



On the left you see the pin Dunning suggested to Shaw and Cohen and the B3M members. It was brilliant and unique. Note that the middle “J” is crooked/evil, representing Professor Moriarty. Another subtlety Mr. Dunning pointed out to me recently is that the 3 “J”s tied with the bar at the top can represent the letter “M” for Moriarty.

In 2019, on my 75th birthday, I had the honor of meeting Saul Cohen at his home near Tesuque, NM. He is every bit as interesting a character as John Bennett Shaw. It must be the New Mexico air or the sage. In any case, I asked Saul whether there were any B3M pins still available. He said he knew of only one—*his*. Saul will be 95 in July; he had been looking for someone to entrust his John Shaw and B3M files to—including his pin. With my work on JBS website and the B3M scion society, he said he “had found the perfect JAMES to keep [his] pin.”

See more of this story here: [Saul Cohen-B3M Charter member](#)



Did you know that former members **Marino and Vicki Alvarez** have begun a new Sherlockian scion society in Estero, FL? It is the **Tidewater Sherlock Holmes group:1895 Shillings**.

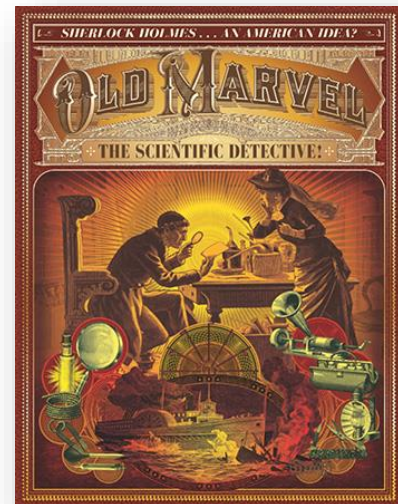
As former Nashville Scholars and long-time residents of Nashville, Marino and Vicki are doing well in their new setting, near their son and his wife and their darling granddaughters!

Also, we were happy to see an early member of the Scholars return to our May meeting: **Alben Shockley**. Welcome Back!

Precursors of Sherlock: A Review of Two Books by Shinwell Johnson

At our first post-pandemic, in-person meeting in April, I showed the group a copy of a recently discovered 19th-century mystery novel, published in book form for the first time in December 2021. *Old Marvel, the Scientific Detective!* by “Grip” first appeared in serial form in the story paper *Saturday Night* in 1884. A story paper was a tabloid-size paper, formatted like a newspaper, usually eight pages, and containing one or two serialized stories, usually with an illustration or two. While they originated in the U.S., they were frequently reprinted in Great Britain. They included a number of genres, but the most popular was the detective story, starting with the character Old Sleuth in 1872 and soon followed by Old Cap Collier, Old King Brady, and (young?) Nick Carter.

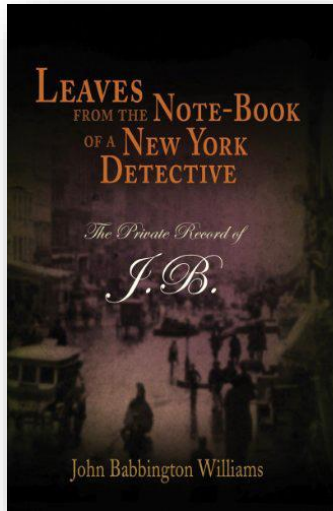
In an introduction to this first book version (Dark Lantern Tales, 2021), Joseph Rainone, who discovered the serial in dusty archives, seeks to make the case that *Old Marvel* could have been a direct influence on Conan Doyle in the creation of Holmes. H. Marvel, Chemist, as the sign states on his door, is a private consultant of the police, who recommend clients to him. He uses observation (complete with magnifying glass) and scientific analysis of clues to solve crimes, usually without leaving his quarters. And he has his own Moriarty, John Arkhurst. The story proper involves his helping an attractive young woman whose father is missing and her guardian murdered; additionally, her fiancé, Clyde, and her inheritance are in jeopardy. Marvel employs many scientific gadgets as aids, as well as taking Clyde along as his assistant, to whom he explains things (a functional Watson).



Typical of serials, there are breathless adventures, perilous escapes, and a cliff-hanger ending for each episode. It is a bit wearying after a while. Further complicating things for the reader (at least, this reader) is the format. In the story paper, the text was in five columns per page, making for narrow lines. As a result, most paragraphs are single sentences. While the book only uses the standard single column per page, it retains the original paragraph format, so that the text looks more like notes than a narrative.

So, is it worth reading? That depends on one’s tolerance for stilted dialogue, coincidence, breathless action, and lack of character development. Certainly as a possible influence on ACD, it is worth consideration, although it lacks his polish, pacing, characterization, and colorful detail, among other things. (A more likely descendent of Old Marvel is Arthur B. Reeve’s Craig Kennedy, *Scientific Detective*, of the 1910s through the ’30s.) One further piece of evidence for

influence on Conan Doyle that Rainone presents is the fact that, while *Old Marvel* was being serialized, a companion serial in most of the same issues was titled *The Elder's Wards!: A Story of Utah and the Mormons*. Hmmm. By the way, this edition also includes *A Study in Scarlet* as serialized in the story paper *The Illustrated Home Guest* in 1892.



A closer affinity with Holmes, if a less likely influence, can be found in *Leaves from the Note-book of a New York Detective: The Private Record of J. B.* by John Babbington Williams (1865; reprint, Westholme Publishing, 2008). It is a collection of reminiscences (i.e., short stories) of independent American detective James Brampton, who also solves crimes through keen observations and deductive reasoning. While the mysteries are rather simple by our standards (if not elementary), they are impressive for their time. In a few pages, Brampton becomes involved in a case either by request or by association, doubts the guilt of the accused, investigates, notices something amiss, confronts a suspect, and wrests a confession, sometimes proving the police wrong in the process. Occasionally he works in disguise. While most stories are set in the New York area, some take him to other East Coast cities as well as to Chicago and even France.

The stories are supposedly related by Brampton to the author, Williams, who was a doctor (another interesting coincidence), and while they are clearly of the mid-nineteenth century, they are much more literate and readable than *Old Marvel*, and they have more of the spirit and style of Conan Doyle, although they are sometimes too reliant on coincidence. Still, they are entertaining and relatively brief. If they were not a direct influence on the Master, they are a worthy antecedent.

Both books can be found on Amazon.

