

NEWSLETTER



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President's Message: The RLS Club of Monterey is 20 Years Old

In the months leading up to the 100 year anniversary of RLS' death in 1994 there was a keen, worldwide interest in all things RLS. Articles and books were published, plays were written and performed, and every resource was tapped for intensive research. In Monterey the community at large became aware, maybe for the first time, what a treasure trove of personal RLS materials and artifacts we had right here in the Stevenson House collection. Visitors and inquiries arrived from around the world, and a bond was formed, rooted in our common interest in RLS' work and life. The RLS club of Monterey was founded to help facilitate many of the local programs which marked that exciting period. In the years to follow club members have participated in RLS events held from California to Scotland and New York State, from Australia and New Zealand to France, Hawaii and Samoa and have made lifelong friends among Stevenson enthusiasts in the process.

Over the years local club events have included hikes, readings, book discussions, travel logs, plays and musical performances all in the footsteps of RLS. To keep the awareness alive many of these events have been open to public participation. Today the mission of the RLS Club of Monterey is primarily focused on keeping the Stevenson House and its unique collection open to visitors on Saturdays from April to September. We are always looking for new members, so if you have friends who would like to join to help in this effort please bring them to the Stevenson House on Saturday, they might just find another passion to fill their lives.

Calendar of Upcoming Events

May 18 (Sunday) 12:00 - 3:00PM
 Pot Luck Picnic at the Point Lobos garden of club member Monica Hudson. RSVP to:
 Monicahudson@gmail.com and receive directions.

August 30 (Saturday) 4:00 - 6:00PM
 Event at the Stevenson House in memory of RLS' coming to Monterey 135 years ago. Program to be announced.

November 22 (Saturday) 2:00PM
 RLS' Unbirthday, a poetry reading by Keith Deck with community participation at the Monterey Public Library

Membership Dues Reminder: Dooty is Dooty, Dues are due !

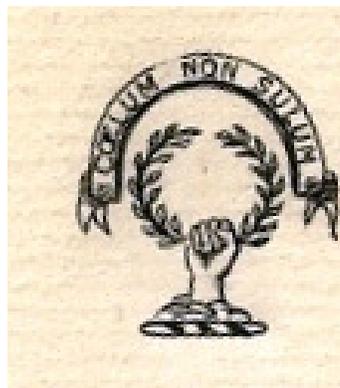


Your dues make the Newsletter and the Club sponsored events possible. If you have not already paid your 2014 dues, please send a check for \$10.00 made out to the RLS Club of Monterey to:
 Robert Louis Stevenson Club of Monterey
 c/o Maureen Bianchini
 309 Mar Vista Drive
 Monterey, CA 93940
 If you have any questions about the status of your dues, please email the Club Treasurer at bobj83@comcast.net.

Stevenson House OPEN

The Stevenson House in Monterey is open again every Saturday for the summer. Members of the Monterey State Historic Park Association and the RLS Club of Monterey are volunteering to keep the Stevenson House open every Saturday from 1-4pm from the beginning of April through the end of September.

RLS' Mourning Stationery



The Stevenson House curatorial staff has been re-inventorying the "vault" and through this effort we are reminded of the fabulous Stevenson Archival Collection. One set of archival documents recently donated to the Stevenson House are several sheets of mourning stationery that are from a set that once belonged to and were used by RLS. Mourning stationery was used throughout the Victorian Era in which there was a morbid fascination with death and dying. The Victorian period from 1837-1901 was an age when customs and practices relating to death were very important to the British, and condolence letters were a part of this culture.



Also part of this culture was for women to wear black when in mourning. Margaret Stevenson (RLS's mom) continued to dress in black (just as Queen Victoria did) after the death of their husbands.

The donated RLS mourning stationery came from a set of 23 sheets that sold at auction decades ago. The donor had inherited his sheets from relatives and graciously gave the artifacts to the Stevenson House. The stationery includes the Stevenson Family Crest with text which reads, "COELUM NON SOLUM". In English this motto translates to "Heaven not Earth". The Stevenson Family Crest can be found on other artifacts in the collection, most notably on Louis' flask and on his silver sandwich case, both currently on display in the Stevenson House. On your next visit to the Stevenson House, see if you can locate the Stevenson Family Crest.

Heartstrings at RLS House

On Saturday afternoon March 15 a small but enthusiastic audience was treated to a lively concert in the Stevenson House Sala by the local band *Heartstrings*. The performance was followed by an outdoor reception with wine and appetizers. This local 5 piece band was founded over 20 years ago as an all girl band. With founding members Paulette on hammered dulcimer and Marj on guitar current members, the band is now rounded out with Laura on violin, Rick on Bass, and Mike on mandolin.

Though the program at the Stevenson House was basically Celtic, in homage to St. Patrick, the band added pieces from their vast repertoire of acoustical music from all over the world. This program was sponsored by Monterey State Park and the RLS Club

RLS Unbirthday celebration in 2013

On November 12, we celebrated the Unbirthday of RLS at the Monterey Public Library with a performance of *Myself and the Other Fellow; the early life of Robert Louis Stevenson*, a one-man, multi-media play devised, written, and performed by Howard Burnham. "The setting is the Carmel Valley, California, 1879. Robert Louis Stevenson, seemingly rejected by his American lover, Fanny Vandergrift Osbourne, has gone on an ill-equipped camping trip into the Carmel Valley, which in reality is protracted attempt at suicide. Feverishly, he relives his formative years: his Edinburgh childhood as the only child of devoted and pious parents, his father's disappointment at his rejecting the family tradition of civil engineering, and his absorption into the *vie de Boheme*, his brief and inglorious legal career, his travels in France, and his meeting the extraordinary Fanny Osbourne, culminating in his misadventures an "amateur emigrant" pursuing her to Monterey, California." written by Howard Burnham.

New Light on The South Seas from Unpublished Pages and Stevenson's Day-to-Day Journals

by Roger G. Swearingen

[Please note that that Roger spent a month researching RLS original manuscripts at the Huntington Library when writing this article and found fascinating differences between the original South Seas manuscripts and those that were published by Sidney Colvin]

Stevenson's day-to-day journals from his first two cruises in the South Seas - aboard the yacht *Casco* in 1888-1889 and the trading schooner *Equator* in 1889 - have attracted almost no attention from his biographers or from most literary scholars, even those writing about his work in the South Seas.

The reason is simple. No one, then or now, seems to think (or to have thought) at all highly of *The South Seas*, a work that Stevenson called "my big book on the South Seas: *the* big book on the South Seas it ought to be, and shall" (RLS to Marcel Schwob, 19 August 1890, Letter 2238). And his day-to-day journals consist of almost 250 legal-sized pages in Stevenson's not particularly legible handwriting - a formidable task for anyone merely to read.

I have now had the pleasure of doing just that, thanks to four weeks of undivided research time that I was able to spend recently with these pages at the Huntington Library in San Marino, California. I have also had the pleasure of making a complete, annotated transcription of the first half-dozen chapters of *The South Seas* as Stevenson himself wrote them: forty-four folio manuscript leaves, 16,000 words, now in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

Unseen and unknown for more than a century, these opening pages are titled "Whites in the Pacific" (or "Sailors and Traders", or "schooners, islands and maroons", to give two other versions of the title from Stevenson's outlines). And they offer a panoramic survey of life as it was actually being lived in the South Seas when Stevenson was there. He depicts an environment of whites of many nationalities far from the places of their birth and upbringing and of native peoples who themselves exhibit a great diversity of outlooks and cultures, a world made up of men living in harbour towns and on islands and aboard ships, and of men, women, and children, native and white, living on islands and in island groups separated by vast distances of open, largely empty, imperfectly charted, unlighted and unpredictable seas.

It is a world in which life and commerce go forward according to rules and customs and uncertainties that would baffle or at least surprise most outsiders: a world of vitality, incoherence, danger, risk, and charm - and often of outlandish humour and misbehaviour as well. Beginning the book as he does - anecdotally, and with a focus on "Whites in the Pacific" - Stevenson frames *The South Seas* as a work of contemporary social history rather than as autobiography, narrative, journalism, or travel.

This is not at all the same book that generations have known under the title *In the South Seas*. *In the South Seas* is a compilation that Stevenson's friend Sidney Colvin made after Stevenson's death for publication in the Edinburgh Edition of Stevenson's works in 1896. Colvin reprinted the chapters on the Marquesas, the Paumotus, and the Gilbert Islands that Stevenson himself had seen published in 1891 in the New York *Sun* and other newspapers and in the English weekly magazine *Black and White*. But Colvin did not include the chapters on the pearl islands of Penrhyn and Manihiki. Nor did he include Stevenson's account of Hawaii, possibly from a wish not to reprint Stevenson's lengthy comments on leprosy and his account of visiting the leper settlement on the Hawaiian island of Molokai in late May 1889. Nor did he publish Stevenson's own opening chapters, no doubt because he had no idea that they existed. The result was *In the South Seas*, a remarkable book as it stands but something completely different from *The South Seas* as Stevenson outlined and began writing it.

"His majesty was very Arabian and monstrous languid," Stevenson wrote in one passage in his day-to-day journal that is only glanced at in the published version, near the end of the first chapter of his account of Butaritari, in the Gilbert Islands: "and though the courtiers made very merry with us, examining the gold stoppings in our teeth, the sovereign but twice condescended to smile, never to speak. The queen on the other hand will retain a lively impression of our visit; for when one of our party played the part of Commander Goode [in *King Solomon's Mines*] and snapped his false teeth at her, she became deadly pale and was thenceforth unable to remove her eyes from the performer. A younger lady, after the same experience, retired behind the royal privy, and I could observe her to experiment on the condition of her own teeth; they were fast enough and white enough you may be sure."

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Stevenson's day-to-day journals are occasionally amusing, as in the present instance. But they show, at all times, how much effort Stevenson put into revising his journals for publication. In the first three chapters on the Marquesas, the first landfall of the *Casco*, Stevenson takes passages from more than twenty different places in his journal, from the third to the fifty-seventh page and ranging in length from a few words to more than a thousand. He adds clarification and context, and above all he adds thematic comments and reflections: long and short passages that make narratives, facts, and conversations in the journals instances of themes rather than mere occurrences. Tari (Charlie) Coffin and his family, so poignantly presented in the third chapter of Stevenson's account of the Marquesas, "The Maroon", is first mentioned under the date of July 22nd [1888], on the eleventh page in Stevenson's journal: "We were aware of an elderly grizzled man, of a younger fellow, slim and tall and grave, and a girl of sixteen, with her baby in her arms. The girl had remarked our presence; and the family had come down the den to make us welcome after the island fashion, so unassuming to us clumsy and niggardly barbarians, so embarrassing." For the published version, Stevenson then draws upon, reshapes, and provides context for material from this and three other places in his journal, transforming the account of Tari Coffin into an instance of the profound melancholy that he saw as dominating the outlook of the Marquesans.

Extensive and representative selections from Stevenson's journals, the complete text of his original opening chapters for *The South Seas*, annotations, photographs and illustrations, outlines, and much else - even a previously unknown chapter on the island of Manihiki - will all appear together in a new, complete reading edition of Stevenson's "big book" that I now have in preparation. For the first time it will be possible to see and read *The South Seas* as Stevenson himself envisioned it and as he actually began it. *The South Seas* is a fascinating and major work that will add significantly - and brilliantly - to the Stevenson canon.

Book Review: "Under the Wide and Starry Sky"

by Rosemary Smith

Stevenson is back in the spotlight with Nancy Horan's 'Under the Wide and Starry Sky'...a best selling novel is a fact-and-fiction telling of Stevenson's passionate marriage to Fannie Van de Grift Osbourne." (quote: S.F. Chronicle). Today Show Book Club pick, N.Y. Times critic says "While the retelling of the Stevenson lives is rather pedestrian, R.L.S. comes through as utterly irresistible".

The story follows Fannie who, at 35, leaves her charming though philandering husband, Sam, and embarks for Belgium with three children and a nanny. As we know, Sam's charms were no match to those of R.L.S. Fannie appears to be a woman who is a magnet for drama and the book highlights her struggles and challenges. Louis Stevenson's personality is given an interesting study, as is Fannie's mental breakdown in Samoa. The author, whose previous book "Loving Frank", the story of Frank Lloyd Wright, has done much research, and the book is a good refresher for those who have forgotten some of the rich detail of the lives of Louis and Fannie Stevenson. I enjoyed the many R.L.S. quotes which are Stevenson favorites. The book is available at local libraries.

I enjoyed the book and encourage Club members to give it a read. Also interested in Your Critique!

Passing of Ed Reynolds

We are sad to announce the recent death of Ed Reynolds, our dear friend and former director of the Stevenson Museum in St Helena. A former Hollywood writer, Ed was a charming man who, as Director, loved wrote and presented RLS one man plays. He will be sadly missed.