



Canada and Sherlock Holmes

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A world-class Sherlockian collection like that at the Toronto Reference Library is simply not left on the doorstep one night. The article except below recounts the genesis of that collection.

Canada and Sherlock Holmes – Book Excerpt

A Closer Look at the Four Pillars

by Hartley Nathan

In May 2014 the Friends of the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection published a booklet to celebrate its new home in the Marilyn and Charles Baillie Special Collections Centre of the Toronto Reference Library. The booklet bore the title *The Four Pillars: The Foundations of The Arthur Conan Doyle Collection, Toronto Reference Library*.

In his introduction to the booklet, the current Friends chair, Cliff Goldfarb, refers to the four major purchases made by the library between 1969 and the early 1970s from Arthur Baillie, Judge S. Tupper



A budding junior Sherlockian is introduced to the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection in its new quarters while curator Peggy Purdue and Don Hobbs, general editor for this volume, converse in the background. Credit: Peter Calamai.

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Bigelow, Harold Mortlake and Nathan Bengis. These purchases created the foundation of the Collection and are the “Four Pillars.” Cliff traces the history of the location of the Library from its humble beginnings at College and St. George Streets in Toronto to its current location at 789 Yonge Street.

Cliff, I, Doug Wrigglesworth and Phillip Elliott respectively described the purchases, and these descriptions are summarized here.

The Four Pillars

Hugh-Anson Cartwright, the venerable antiquarian Toronto bookseller, sold a collection of mystery and detective stories to the library in June 1969. This collection consisted of some “five hundred volumes of vintage detective stories, horror stories, thrillers of all kinds.” It was acquired from the estate of Arthur V. Baillie for \$1,000. Baillie (circa 1910-1966) was the American-born son of a Canadian father and British mother. He spent his working life in the casualty insurance business in various places in the United States and Toronto, where he lived at the time of his death. A full list of his collection no longer exists. According to the library’s files the collection contained various Sherlockian writings as well as other mystery writers including Dorothy Sayers, Sax Rohmer, E.W. Hornung (three *Raffles*), Christopher Morley and some 34 Vincent Starrett books. Many of these were autographed by the authors.

Judge S. Tupper Bigelow (1901-1993) is the Second Pillar. He was born in Truro, Nova Scotia, was a Queen’s Counsel, appointed a Magistrate in Toronto (later renamed a Provincial Court Judge) in 1945 and served as such until he retired in 1976. He founded the *Ontario Magistrates Quarterly* and was its first editor. He was appointed Chairman of the Ontario Racing Commission in 1950. His lifelong passion was the study of Sherlock Holmes. Thirty of his Sherlockian papers were posthumously published by the Library as *The Baker Street Briefs*.

Judge Bigelow was well known in Sherlockian circles for his correspondence, his contributions to various Sherlockian journals, his topical index and his possession of a mass of Sherlockiana that he exhibited from time to time.

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Judge S. Tupper Bigelow describes his donated Sherlockian collection in 1970 for Mary McMahon, head of the Library's literature section, and Cameron Hollyer, the first curator of the Arthur Conan Doyle collection.



In November 1970 the library purchased this material for \$7,000. Included in this collection were several thousand cards constituting his index of the Writings on the Writings;¹ some 500 books; magazines and pamphlets by Vincent Starrett, Christopher Morley and Edgar W. Smith, and complete runs of *The Baker Street Journal*, *The Sherlock Holmes Journal* and a good many scion society periodicals. ...

(Continued)

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¹ This Index was updated by the late Donald Redmond in 1974 and 1977 in a publication called *Bigelow on Holmes*.