

PART IV

LEHMAN YEARS

"...crowds of pilgrims..."

John Lehman was a natural choice for the new sparking plug. One of the most active Plainsmen, he had cheerfully assumed the role of Lellenberg's local assistant after Steve Mann moved away in 1978, and had contributed a good deal of scholarship and levity alike to the scion since his first meeting in 1976. He was about to undertake his second BSI weekend in New York, with the honor of proposing the canonical toast to Mycroft Holmes at the BSI dinner. So it was with considerable experience and energy that he moved up to the head of the Plainsmen's caravan at the beginning of 1982.

And he brought off a coup in his first year by cornering John Bennett Shaw's workshop for Kansas City. Lehman had started discussing the idea in the autumn of '81 with various local institutions of higher learning, to see which had enough imagination to host it. UMKC and William Jewell proved to be lacking in that quality, but Rockhurst College was enthusiastic, and by February it was clear that Shaw & Co. could hold forth there in July. "There will be a lot of Jesuits around," Lehman acknowledged, "but they'll be required to watch their language around Shaw." Planning got underway with Rockhurst official Len Grinstead, whose strong support entitles his name to an honored place in this history.

Meanwhile, the Plainsmen met again in "the Dead of Winter" of February 27th, for another costume party at Stan Carmack's home. More than thirty Plainsmen were present, including Philip Shreffler clad in buckskins as Jefferson Hope, with a .44 revolver and a Bowie knife on his belt. His wife Karen Johnson came as The Most Winning Woman, with a noose around her neck and three insurance policies from the Moriarty Casualty Co. peeking from her purse. Shreffler begged the Plainsmen's attention to announce the founding of a new scion, The Jefferson Hopes of St. Louis, with the sole purpose of writing and reading scholarly papers aloud. So painful was the strained silence that greeted this news, that the Plainsmen actually welcomed the scream which suddenly arose from the basement. The Plainsmen rushed down to find Tom Gee murdered in a bathtub. It was uncharitable for Daisy Wright to accuse Milt Perry when Dr. Wheeler, a coroner once in one of his many former lives, pronounced the murder the work of a psychopath; it was typical of rude Missouri justice for Shreffler to remark that "it doesn't matter if we hang the right man as long as we hang someone." But it was simply embarrassing when the dastardly crime was finally solved only by Stan Carmack's nine-year-old son, pointing the finger of guilt at Charles Wheeler himself -- who broke down and confessed.

It was at the Dead of Winter, appropriately, that Shreffler first muttered that he wanted to be a member of The Great Alkali Plainsmen. Clearly he found something lacking in St. Louis Sherlockiana: he had founded The Noble Bachelors in 1969, now he had founded another scion society there as well -- but still he craved to be a Great Alkali Plainsman. The Kansas Citians present cleared their throats self-consciously, and shuffled their

feet, and the idea was taken, as they say, under advisement.

By spring, some Plainsmen were wondering what had become of certain scion projects. John Altman was reportedly acquiring a new editing table in March, on which, he pledged, to complete the scion's recorded version of A Study in Scarlet. But by May nothing had been heard, and Altman's move across State Line into Kansas put him "out of reach of a threat by Sgt. Gee to book him," Lehman complained. That same month, Lehman had gone searching for the uncompleted manuscript of Sherlock Holmes in Kansas City. Tracked down in Topeka, it was sent on to Margaret Baldwin in Independence, and next turned up in Art Brisbane's May 12th Kansas City Times column. Referring to the Plainsmen scholarship that had traced the Master to Kansas City and linked him to Jesse James as "deft" (which we will take as typographically correct) "and immensely complex," Brisbane quoted Lehman on the inimitable style of Kansas City's scion society: "We've become more like Jesse James and the bushwhackers."

That proved true on June 4th, when the Plainsmen returned to the Jesse James Farm. Milt Perry showed off the almost unbelievable restoration that had been accomplished; the house now looked much as it had when Frank and Jesse were still shooting marbles, instead of Yankees and Pinkerton detectives. Milt demanded a dollar from everyone "with a smile, just like Jesse." But a worse shock, when people opened their picnic baskets, was Milt's announcement that alcoholic beverages could not be consumed on the grounds, according to Jesse James's mother's will. Was there no end to the depravity of that family?

On to Brother Shaw's workshop. Just as it is difficult to convey the zest, camaraderie, and downright ecstasy of the event to those who have not attended one, so it is not easily described how much unsung local effort went into the making of the three-day Rockhurst revel, held over the weekend of July 9-11. But it may suggest the magnitude of the effort to record that John Lehman, Jerry Gaines, John Tibbetts, Stan Carmack, Lenore Carroll, John Altman, Don McClain, Harry Fey, and Galen Johnson all labored mightily to bring the event to the attention of like-minded people on the Plain. Their labors were rewarded when ninety-eight pilgrims, nearly a record for Shaw's workshops, came from seventeen states, Texas, and Canada.

For the Great Alkali Plainsmen were not seeking to make Shaw's workshop merely a scion event. From the first, in their enlightened way, they viewed it as a regional event, doing their best for the sake of the Game to attract Afghanistan Perceivers, Arkansas Valley Investors, Noble Bachelors, and even Maiwand Jezails (who comprised 4% of the participation and 37% of the noise). They shared the platform magnanimously with the likes of Philip Shreffler, Richard Lesh, Stafford Davis, and visitors from even farther afield. And an exciting program it was, with panels, movies, quizzes, contests, talks both spontaneous and painstakingly-prepared, and more -- unflinchingly interesting, and heavily seasoned with humor and wit. "Most of the people here are insane," the Kansas City Star Magazine quoted Brother Shaw as saying, "but it keeps them from being dull."

The Great Alkali Plainsmen were conspicuously involved, though. John Lehman, sporting a fringe of frontier beard, greeted registrants on Friday afternoon as the scion's Avenging Angel, and other Plainsmen did their best

throughout the weekend to show Kansas City to the out-of-towners. (Including assisting Shaw to eat his way through the entire Gates' Barbeque menu during the course of the week!) Jon Lellenberg spoke Saturday on Holmes pastiches and copyright law, and helped judge Shaw's literary contest, from which Margaret Baldwin emerged with the top prize. Ernest Willer eloquently toasted John and Lucy Ferrier at the Saturday night banquet, expansively defining the Great Alkali Plain as stretching from Peoria to Pasadena. John Lehman led the Sherlockian singalong after the dinner. Brother Shaw's "Sherlock Holmes and His Friends" talk dwelt hilariously on the Great Alkali Plainsmen, claiming that the slow-moving line at the bar during the cocktail hour proved the workshop was indeed taking place in Kansas City. And after it was all over, on Sunday evening, Lellenberg hosted a barbecue at his Prairie Village residence. "All in all," Chicago BSI John Nieminski later told his mystery-fan fraternity, the DAPA-EM, "it was about as relaxing and enjoyable a three days as one could hope for in this manic age."

Shreffler had spoken pedagogically that weekend about "How to Write a Sherlockian Paper". The Noble Bachelors later giped that some Plainsmen had been inspired by it to attempt literacy -- though our own Margaret had won the workshop's literary prize. But Shreffler's continuing attempts to turn healthy Sherlockians into academic drudges was duly noted. The talk definitely damaged his chances of becoming a Plainsman: "It is all I can do to prevent a lynching party," Lehman warned him. But Shreffler refused to give up.

The empties had scarcely been thrown out before Lehman found himself plunged into another undertaking. It happened that one Plainsman, Martin Baier, was on the board of regents of Kansas City's laudable Missouri Repertory Theatre. For years Martin had urged MRT to do William Gillette's Sherlock Holmes; for years MRT's artistic director had shrugged the idea off -- the play was too long, too expensive, too dull, etc. Then in July the good lady turned on her television to find all three networks broadcasting Shaw's Sherlock Holmes workshop at Rockhurst College, and suddenly it struck her that Holmes might not be such a bad fellow on stage after all. MRT's tune changed, and the Gillette play began to seem possible for MRT's 1983 season; or, alternatively, Conan Doyle's own Speckled Band. By the end of August, The Speckled Band seemed ahead, for its smaller cast and simpler sets -- but oh! that snake! The debate inside MRT's arcane bureaucracy went on for some time.

"We shall have no wolves in the fold."

After their exertions earlier that summer, the Plainsmen took it easy on August 22nd with Arthur Wontner's Silver Blaze at the Fine Arts Theater in Fairway, followed by a picnic at Stan Carmack's new home in Prairie Village. There was much praise for Wontner's merits as an impersonator of the Master, though Milt Perry expressed great indignation that the single most important line in the Canon -- "The dog did nothing in the night-time" -- had been removed by an unfortunate splice in the film. Milt had had to be forcibly restrained in the theater by those sitting around him from rising and shouting out the line.

The most discordant note in the entire meeting, Margaret Baldwin reported in Daily Journal No. 33, came when John Lehman reminded the Plainsmen that Philip Shreffler wanted to join our scion society.

Heated discussion followed. Milt Perry stated that he was in favor since anyone who admired Jesse James couldn't be all bad. Dr. Richard Garland, our expert in abnormal psychology, stated that he was very interested in meeting anyone who wanted to join the Plainsmen. I felt it my solemn duty, though, to remind the group that this meant we would probably be forced to write scholarly papers.

Groans.

"Not only write them but read them aloud..."

More groans.

"And we'd have to listen to them!" Lehman added in sepulchral tones.

The sounds of shock and outrage brought Stan's neighbors over to investigate, and I am afraid a vote taken then and there would have shattered Shreffler's hopes forever. But then a voice spoke up out of the darkness of the shrubbery.

"Remember: we haven't had a Blood Initiation in a long time..."

The next meeting took place at The Maggie Jones on November 13th. "There will be a lively discussion of what the scion should do about this Shreffler person," the announcement promised: "Plainsmen who own tar, feathers, or a rail are especially encouraged to attend." The dinner was a casual occasion, dignified somewhat by a videotape of John Altman, John Lehman, and Harry Fey, on Jerry Gaines's Prairie Village cable TV program the previous summer, plugging Shaw's workshop. Plainsmen refreshed their memories as to Altman's appearance, admired Fey's eloquent tribute to the Canon, and applauded the sight of Lehman falling backwards off his chair.

The discussion of the Shreffler Question was a lively one, made more so by Lehman's announcement of a new scion competition: the next Plainsman to have a scholarly paper accepted for publication by one of the major Sherlockian journals would win a handsome medal that the Maiwand Jezails had struck the previous year.* Lehman felt that the Great Alkali Plainsmen had not produced enough Sherlockian scholarship over the years, and he wanted to change that. But others saw things differently. "Shreffler's influence," grumbled Don McClain. Margaret Baldwin proposed a new vote on membership for Shreffler, but her attempt was cut short when Shreffler's principal advocate, Milt Perry, discovered his glass was empty and led a new rush for the bar. (One

* To Lellenberg's annoyance, he was ruled an ineligible Phenomenon, dashing the miserly creature's hopes of possessing a Jezails medal without having to pay for it."

Plainsman, eyeing Margaret narrowly, suggested that she consult an exorcist.)

To everyone's consternation, Shreffler raised the ante soon thereafter, insisting that the Plainsmen also admit his wife Karen, a bonafide member of The Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes (like our own Lenore Carroll, who luxuriates in the ASH investiture of "Lucy Ferrier"). "Consider carefully," he urged. "Look at the photos of our costumes at the meeting at Stan's. Are we not excellent examples of the sort of middle-brow riff-raff to which you're accustomed in Kansas City? Are we not unsavory in appearance? Even sinister? Do we not fit in? And recall the two men that I've come to represent: Jefferson Hope and Jesse James. It's something to think about."

It certainly was, and so was the polemic published almost simultaneously in the Noble Bachelors' Morning Post:

The Lehman-Shreffler Matter,
or A Bachelor Amidst the Plainsmen

For nigh on a year now, there has been an exchange of ideas between John Lehman, Avenging Angel of the Great Alkali Plainsmen of Kansas City, and the editor of the Morning Post. To wit: Shreffler has pressed his suit (rumpled though it may be) to join -- actually to join -- the Noble Bachelors' sister scion society in Kansas City. This Shreffler considered only a matter of good will and of the clearest logic. However, the Plainsmen, led by Lehman, have balked at admitting Shreffler, on the grounds that Shreffler's influence would necessitate the Plainsmen's becoming literate and from there going on to having to write scholarly Canonical papers.* As a result of this dilemma, vicious canards (Plainsmen may consult their dictionaries, if any) have been hurled between our two cities both in private correspondence and in the pages of our respective journals. (Fairness dictates that one mention that the Jesse James faction in Kansas City favors Shreffler's candidacy.)

It was reported recently that Plainsman Jon (sic) Lellenberg, BSI, feared the Lehman-Shreffler matter would erupt into a full-blown blood feud between the two scions; this, of course, demonstrates the inherent weakness of the military mind. Feuds are under the aegis of Washington; in Missouri we have fun. Moreover, how could a feud ever develop when it has been shown beyond any doubt that the Plainsmen cannot read well enough to comprehend Shreffler's insults?

The most recent Kansas City Daily Journal dropped veiled hints that the City of Fountains' scion might be willing to accept Shreffler as a member were there to be a blood initiation. Shreffler fears not. His wife, Karen Johnson, ASH, is employed in the blood bank of St. Louis University Hospital, and she has her instructions -- ten units of "O Positive" whole blood on hand

* This sentence has not been tampered with in order to satirize the point about literacy that it was ineptly trying to make. It appears above exactly as printed in the November 1982 Morning Post.

at all times.

Beyond this, it is only sensible that Shreffler be admitted to the Plainsmen. His BSI investiture is, after all, "Jefferson Hope" -- as appropriate to the Alkali Plains as any Canonical character. John Lehman, on the other hand, is not, as far as we know, a BSI. The Plainsmen could benefit from Shreffler's membership, even if that membership were in name only. When Lehman is more mature, and can grow a real beard, he will understand this.

In the meantime, it is important for members of both scions to be aware that the only enmity existing between St. Louis and Kansas City is the traditional one between these two great towns at opposite sides of our state, and that the only major differences between the two scions are these: The Great Alkali Plainsmen cannot read or write but they throw one hell of a toga party. The Noble Bachelors know their Canon by chapter and verse, but they cannot drink enough to make a cash bar pay for itself.

Then there are Shreffler and Lehman themselves. Shreffler is a professor of English. Lehman works for the Internal Revenue Service. Both men, therefore, are obviously universally hated for their professions. It would seem that rather than being cut out for any kind of feud, Lehman and Shreffler deserve each other.

Call it kismet, call it fate. But how can it end,
other than Shreffler's triumphant entry into Kansas City
as a bonafide Plainsman?

While Lehman gasped for breath, Shreffler came under return fire from faraway Washington. Jon Lellenberg had been watching the Shreffler Question anxiously, knowing what a coup his membership would be for the blackhearted Jesse James Faction. Fortunately, knowing Shreffler well, and possessing the acute mind and nimble wit that makes him widely resented within the federal bureaucracy in our nation's capitol, Lellenberg launched a rocket at The Morning Post. A grateful Lehman printed it in Daily Journal No. 34:

To the editor, The Morning Post:

Dear Sir:

I have read your rather peculiar article, about the so-called "Lehman-Shreffler Matter", in the November Morning Post. It is certainly not true that canards have been hurled back and forth between the two scion societies. What ducks could possibly have to do with this matter in any event eludes me. However, a few comments do occur to me upon reading your questionable piece.

- The Plainsmen's objection to Shreffler becoming a member is not that we would have to write scholarly papers. It is that we would have to listen to scholarly papers (his in particular).

- The contention that feuds are unknown in Missouri seems a bit strange considering that the state's history is comprised mainly of Border Ruffians, William Quantrill and Bloody Bill Anderson, the Jesse James gang, and other malefactors. Recalling Shreffler's self-appointed mission as a latter-day apologist for a pair of fugitive bank robbers helps explain the remark. While it is true that there is a Jesse James faction in the Great Alkali Plainsmen, it is balanced by the more pure-minded members hailing from the Kansas side of State Line Road.

- As for not being able to comprehend Shreffler's insults, we in Kansas City are well aware of the dyspeptic character of those who live downriver, discontented sorts trying to bolster their morale with a silly arch commemorating a fictitious role in American history for St. Louis.

- I believe it is the case that Shreffler's BSI investiture was not always "Jefferson Hope"; that in fact this is a rather recent change of investiture from "Lord St. Simon", a transparent and futile attempt to conceal his Noble Bachelor origins and curry favor with the Plainsmen.

- Referring to some vague distant point in the future "when Lehman is more mature and can grow a real beard" seems rather a cheap shot. Suffice it to say that when Lehman does become more mature, he won't even care to grow a beard.

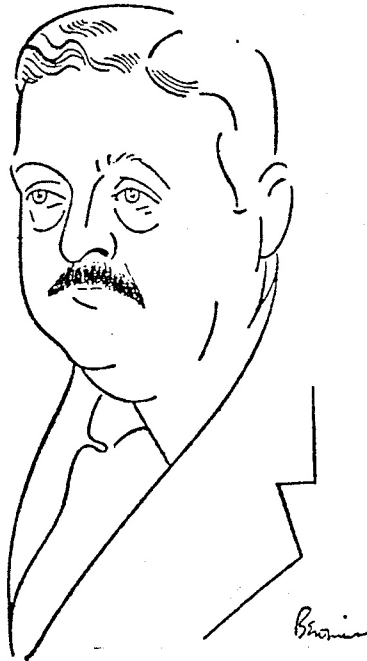
Sincerely,

Rodger Prescott
of evil memory

Lellenberg returned home to chair the Feast of the Blue Carbuncle on December 27th. It was a pleasure to hear Martin Baier's announcement that Missouri Repertory Theatre would definitely perform The Speckled Band during its 1983 season. Philip Shreffler had the nerve to attend the Feast, and the Daily Journal records that he forced the Plainsmen to suffer through a scholarly paper which he wrote on a napkin during dinner. (It had the virtue, at least, of brevity, and of being dissolvable in water.) Shreffler did bring his wife Karen, however, reminding Plainsmen that a few lovely people do still live in St. Louis.



The evening's highlight was a marvelous magic-lantern show about Logan Clendening. Lellenberg had published eight "Clendening Investigation" installments so far in the Daily Journal, covering the good doctor's medical hijinks, his local version of the Algonquin round-table, his literary travels, his Sherlockian associations, collecting, and



Logan Clendenning

writings, his penchants for parties and practical jokes, until his untimely death by his own hand in 1945. Now Lellenberg took pleasure in introducing a very special guest, Dr. Robert Hudson, Logan Clendenning's current successor as chairman of KU Medical Center's Department of the History and Philosophy of Medicine. Dr. Hudson had made a thorough study of Clendenning, and with anecdote after anecdote that evening, he brought him fascinatingly and hilariously to life for the enthralled Plainsmen.

1983 dawned with another Shaw workshop in sight, to be held in Chicago. Philip Shreffler proposed that those in Kansas City and St. Louis wishing to attend travel together to Chicago by train, with the "discharging of firearms between the two scions expressly forbidden while in the cars."* But the Plainsmen, mellowed by that most winning woman, Karen Johnson, had finally decided to admit the persistent Shreffler. John Lehman wrote to him on February 7th to notify him of the decision of the Council

of Elders: "The Jesse James faction is delighted by the prospect of adding another menace to society to their numbers, while the pure of mind in Kansas feel that Karen would cancel out your evil influence." All Plainsmen were exhorted to present themselves on May 21st at Claybrook, an antebellum mansion a stone's throw from the Jesse James Farm (and one more of Milt Perry's restoration projects), to put Shreffler through a trial by ordeal.†

When the dark day arrived -- "Something Shreffler This Way Comes" said Daily Journal No. 36 (June 25, 1983) -- it ended agonizing debate. "The controversy had even gone so far as to split the scion into two factions. The Kansas Faction held out against Shreffler, stating that they wanted only members of good family, noble birth, high morals, and Yankee blood. This faction was in favor of admitting Karen Johnson (who reveals to close personal

* Emphasis in the original.

† There is evidence that the Noble Bachelors lured Lehman to St. Louis that spring, appealing to his vanity and suborning him with the opportunity to present a scholarly paper of his own: something the Plainsmen had not permitted since his Sorokin mindbender of a few years before. (The subject of his St. Louis paper is unknown, but let us hope that the Noble Bachelors also got Sorokin.) They even gave Lehman an unsolicited certificate of membership in their scion. "I spent the weekend in St. Louis and had a wonderful time," Lehman wrote in an unguarded moment: "The Jefferson Hopes should prove to be a truly important addition to the Sherlockian world." (So much for Lehman as prophet.)

friends that she is married to Philip Shreffler). The Missouri Faction, on the other hand, favored Shreffler's admittance on the grounds that he could shoot straight, ride hard, and drink Milt Perry under the table. The fact that he has a predilection for presenting scholarly papers was a mark against him with both factions, but at last a majority voted Shreffler in."

But a Blood Initiation was still on Plainsmen's minds, and the Claybrook event was designed in hopes of dark deeds, or even a supernatural disposition of the Shreffler Issue. (Member or dismember, that is the question.) The Plainsmen gathered in costumes ranging from English Victoriana through American Wild West, plus bloodthirsty necromancers charged with carrying out the initiation ceremony. A grim but resolute Shreffler was led into the darkened and reputedly haunted mansion in shackles, to the weird strains of suitably spooky music. After incantations over a sacrificial sword, the Plainsmen put Shreffler to several tests of his suitability for membership in our scion. The Daily Journal said it all:

Although stating that he knew his Canon chapter and verse, the initiate could not come up with the correct responses to the quotation "Dark nights are unpleasant," admitting that it had been some time since he had read The Valley of Fear. This was received with hoots of derision from the Plainsmen, some of whom wanted to make him a member on the spot. Shreffler was forced to continue, however, and next took the test to see if he could withstand pain. He stood unflinching, listening to one of Margaret Baldwin's worst jokes while the rest of the membership writhed in agony. Following this, Shreffler answered a complex Canonical question to the satisfaction of the membership (most of whom didn't know the difference), and then took the most grueling test of all.

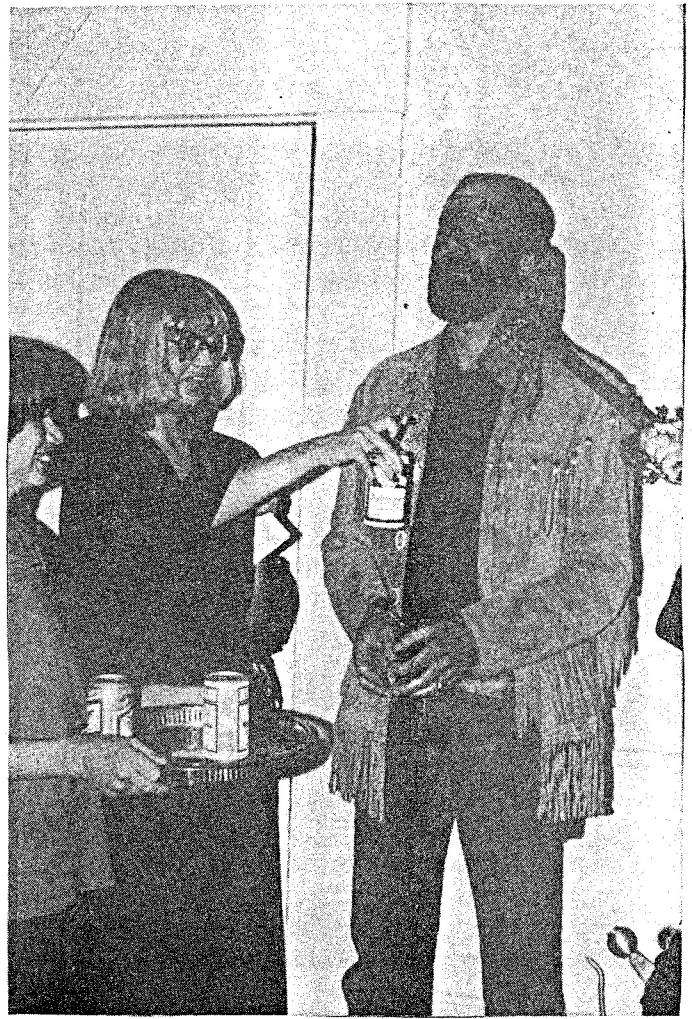
Blindfolded, the initiate was required to drink three beers and identify the brands. No Plainsman has failed to pass this test in recent memory. Imagine their horror when Shreffler admitted, in quavering tones, that he had not the vaguest idea which beer was which! Lehman forced the poor man to his knees and the wizard had the sword at his throat when Baldwin interrupted with the pronouncement that -- according to Plainsman law -- a substitute could take the test for the initiate providing the initiate agreed to be that person's slave for a period of one year. Milt Perry, after some coercion, begging, and pleading from the soon-to-be widow (at least we think that was what she was doing) stepped forward and drank the beers, stared at the cans intently, and named each without hesitation. The brethren judged themselves satisfied, and Shreffler was unmasked and made one of us.

Karen Johnson was admitted as well, and much more readily. The two were given certificates of membership in sub-scions extraordinary of The Great Alkali Plainsmen, created for the occasion. Karen Johnson (surely everyone has noticed by now that she quietly but firmly refuses to go by the name of Shreffler) became one of "The Flowers of Utah". Her beautifully printed black-letter certificate began:

The Flowers of Utah, founded by Jon (Pax Vobiscum)



Plainsman prompts BSI on canonical test.



BSI flunks Beer Test



"Off with his head!!"

Lellenberg,* for the pure-of-mind in Kansas, is a scion of The Great Alkali Plainsmen, which is a scion of the Baker Street Irregulars. We are dedicated to spreading sweetness and light throughout the world by the bushel.

Needless to say, no high spiritual standards were expected of Shreffler. His certificate of membership in "The Great Alcoholic Plainsmen's Jesse James Faksion" (sic) was written in crayon on Big Chief tablet paper. A facsimile of Shreffler's certificate exists in the scion's archives, a circumstance suggesting that archives were created in ancient times to stick stuff like this permanently out of sight. Apparently it did not occur to the Plainsmen to preserve the scholarly paper that Shreffler insisted on reading that evening. Its gist, according to the Daily Journal, was that Jefferson Hope had met Frank and Jesse James during his epic search for Drebber and Stangerson. What did survive was the unabridged text of Shreffler's Great Alkali Plainsmen Classics Number One, written (like others to follow) on the side of a grocery bag:

A LOOK AT BLOOD

ONCE UPON A TIME, TWO BAD MEN KIDNAPPED A PRETTY GIRL. FOR SOME REASON, SHE DIED. A NICE MAN NAMED JEFF DECIDED TO KILL THE BAD MEN, WHICH WASN'T VERY NICE. BUT HE KILLED THEM ANYWAY. THERE WAS NOBODY NAMED RACHEL IN THE STORY.

SHERLOCK HOLMES, WHO IS A DETECTIVE, DECIDED TO TRY TO CATCH JEFF. SHERLOCK TRIED AND TRIED. THEN SHERLOCK DID CATCH JEFF.

JEFF GOT VERY ANGRY AND BROKE SHERLOCK'S WINDOW. THEN JEFF DIED.

DR. WATSON WROTE THIS WHOLE STORY DOWN.

Most Plainsmen were pleased by this evidence of a heartfelt change of ways, although a few drew their own conclusions about the level of American literature that Shreffler teaches down in old St. Louie....

"Say, did God make this country?"

Elsewhere on the Great Alkali Plain, other great events were in the making. It has been mentioned that Glenda Roberts had moved to Pittsburg, KS -- halfway between Kansas City and Tulsa, and less than two score miles northeast of a small and helpless town (pop. 1054) by the name of Altamont. She was eager to pave the way for a full-scale Sherlockian descent upon southeastern Kansas. So the Avenging Angel wrote in April to Stafford Davis, True Perceiver of The Afghanistan Perceivers of Tulsa, to propose a joint meeting

* News to Lellenberg, when he read it in the scion archives five years later.

there. Davis was all for it. He promised to mobilize the Afghan Perceivers' dreaded bagpipe corps, with which Watson, Oklahoma, had been battered into submission back in 1976, and to summon a goodly volume of Perceivers to the fray in their Winnebago-cum-Wet-Bar. "We will surround Altamont and attack at dawn," Davis gloated, "leaving a mysterious plaque glued to the library wall."*

The descent came on July 23rd. Led by the Perceivers' bagpiper, the two scions swept into Altamont as the sun approached High Noon. Word of the onslaught had reached the mayor's ears; he had already (a) proclaimed the 23rd as "Sherlock Holmes Day", and (b) left town. Witnessed by reporters from as far away as Parsons, Kansas, the Plainsmen and the Perceivers refuted all rival New York claimants to the canonical name of Altamont, presented the town library with a copy of The Annotated Sherlock Holmes, and fixed a plaque to the wall of the corridor between the City Hall and the Library declaring the town of Altamont to be a SHERLOCK HOLMES HISTORIC SITE. It still hangs there, perhaps. "These guys were real serious about it," marvelled Altamont City Council president Jean Charles. And when the Plainsmen and Perceivers paraded through the streets of Altamont, "the procession could be seen for miles because of the dust clouds," Stafford Davis boasted to the Pittsburg Sun. Afterwards the Irregular columns advanced on Pittsburg, where they saw a Sherlockian exhibit Glenda had arranged at Pittsburg State, including the Little Blue Book editions of the Canon printed in huge quantities in the 1930s in nearby Girard, Kansas, by socialist publisher E. Haldeman-Julius. The Master "was probably read by more people in these editions than in any other," said local historian Gene DeGruson, joining the Sherlockians for dinner at the old Stillwell Hotel, which had come into being about the same time as Holmes.

"The magnificent spectacle cheered the hearts."

By August, preparations for Missouri Repertory's Speckled Band, scheduled for September 15-25, were well underway. The Plainsman role in its production had expanded with Vikki Marshall designing the costumes. She researched the fashion-year of 1888 thoroughly, matching her designs for some forty costumes as closely as possible to Sidney Paget's illustrations for the canoni-

* Clearly the Master had been sufficiently impressed by Altamont, Kansas, when he passed through in 1880, to adopt the town's name as his alias in His Last Bow. However, Frank Hoffmann, BSI, chief conspirator of An Irish Secret Society at Buffalo, claimed a similarly named New York hamlet as the Master's inspiration. Both John Lehman and Stafford Davis scoffed at this, even if Altamont, KS, stretched Plainsman scholarship to the utmost, since the town planned to celebrate its 100th anniversary in 1984. No matter. "We all know it was during Holmes's visit to Kansas City as a Shakespearean actor," Davis snorted. Lehman agreed: "I think the united forces of the Perceivers and the Plainsmen could just about take on anything. Including Frank Hoffmann who is obviously deluding himself (I have it on good authority that Altamont, NY, was named after Altamont, KS)."