



Robert Louis Stevenson Club of Monterey



Celebrating the life and works of RLS since 1994

In this issue

President's Message.....	p.1
Celebration at TrotterGallery...	p.2
French House Calls.....	p.3-4
Stevenson has home in MRY ..	p.5-6
Zoom Salons.....	p.7
Reading Assignment.....	p.7

Calendar

July 23 (Saturday) 11 am (Pacific Time) The RLS Hour Zoom Salon Discussion of the novel "The Wrecker": Prologue through Chapter 11 (page 7)

August event at Forest Theater: Classic Movie based on RLS tale (details to be announced)

September 24 (Saturday) 11 am (Pacific Time) The RLS Hour Zoom Salon Discussion of the last part of "The Wrecker": Chapter 12 through Epilogue

October 30 (Sunday) noon - 2pm: Halloween Picnic and Cemetery Walk; meet at picnic area across from San Carlos Cemetery on Pearl Street, Monterey . (details later)

November 12 (tentative date, time to be announced): Unbirthday Party for RLS; Monterey Public Library

December 9, 10 (Friday & Saturday) 5-9 pm: Christmas in the Adobes; downtown Monterey

President's Message by Monica Hudson

The RLS Club of Monterey is always evolving, and that has been particularly the case as we are coping with the pandemic. However, we have met this challenge with new ideas which help keep our club relevant. We started our "RLS Hour Zoom Salon" which emphasizes our literary connection. We are challenging ourselves to read an RLS text and share our thoughts. We plan to hold one every quarter and hope even more of our members will join next time. It is fun to see our members from near and far "in person" as it allows us to enjoy their input, ideas, and a good laugh together.

The board has been brainstorming new club event ideas and venues for where to hold them. We continue to partner with other organizations, libraries and schools who share our enthusiasm for all things RLS. We are working on rebuilding our ties to the Stevenson House and to new State Park staff as many of our old park friends have retired. The good news is that the House is open again. The most current hours are listed online under Monterey State Historic Park.

Last but not least ,we want to focus our creative energy on bringing our passion to a new and younger audience. We welcome your ideas and personal connections, be it schools, existing book clubs, or other friendship circles. RLS is always a beacon of light, hope and humanity. I want to thank all our loyal Club members who have supported us over the years.

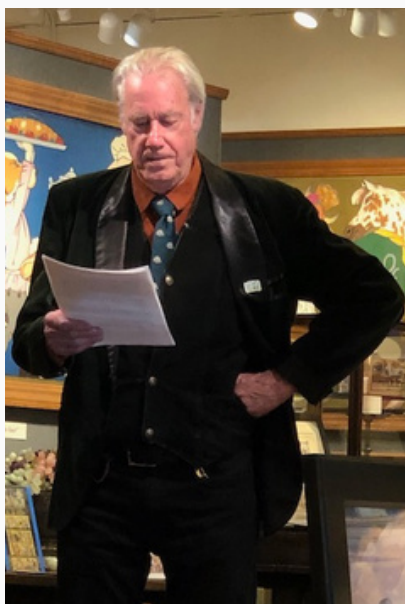
The RLS Club website <https://rlsclubmonterey.org/>
email to rlsclubmonterey@outlook.com

To pay your dues by PayPal, click here:
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You may also mail a \$15 check payable to RLS Club of Monterey,
c/o Lindy Perez, P.O. Box 51504, Pacific Grove, CA 93950

Celebrating the Wedding Anniversary of RLS and Fanny at the Trotter Gallery,

RLS Club members enjoyed an outing at the Trotter Gallery, Pacific Grove, CA, on May 21st, with 25 members in attendance. Club member Terry Trotter opened the gathering by presenting a sketch by Henry Rankin Poore, 1876, and a painting by Meyer Straus, 1878, of the Carmel Mission, similar to when RLS would have visited during San Carlos Day. Terry also showed a 1880 photo of the Colton Hall area discovered by club member, John Sanders, as part of the Mayo Hayes O'Donnell library collection, around the time when RLS was in Monterey. Club member Keith Decker regaled the audience with his Scottish accent reading of excerpts from RLS's letters written to friends during his sojourn in Monterey. After brief introductions from those in attendance, members enjoyed light refreshments while touring the extensive gallery collections of CA artists, including Jules Tavernier, Joe Strong, and a special RLS exhibit.



From left to right: Terry Trotter, Keith Decker, and President Monica Hudson (Treasurer Harish Joshi in background)



Members in the main gallery room



Founding members Bende Kelley and Hugh Bianchini



Newest members
Sonja Millings and Sue Brown



Amy Krupski playing the harp

French House Calls by Lindy Perez, RLS Club Historian

The True Story of two "French Doctors" who cared for RLS during his stay in Monterey

It is any wonder biographers of Robert Louis Stevenson have been confused by his Monterey period. There were too many Frenchmen in the old Spanish capital. First, there was Jean (aka Juan) Girardin who owned the French House (later the French Hotel and today the Stevenson House). He was actually Swiss. There was Dr. Jean (aka John) P. E. Heintz, affectionately nicknamed "the little French doctor" by RLS, who was actually from Luxembourg. Not least of all was the proprietor of the Lyon's Ale Depot and Bohemian Restaurant, Jules Simoneau, born and educated in Nantes, France. Dr. Heintz married Clementina Girardin, daughter of the French House owner, but contrary to popular opinion, Heintz never owned the lodging house and neither did Simoneau.



Dr. Heintz

Into the French quarter wandered a true Francophile, Robert Louis Stevenson. He was sick both at heart and in body, as he wrote a friend in the autumn of 1879. Before he could recover from his traveling ordeal across the sea and plains, RLS made things worse by camping alone in remote Carmel Valley and becoming sicker. Luckily, he was rescued by two all-American ranchers and returned to Monterey somewhat better. However, the cool, foggy air of the Monterey coast never let him recover completely, and worries about his future with Fanny, his low finances, estrangement from his parents, and need to work at his writing, all aggravated his vulnerable health.

In Monterey, there was not a good selection of healthcare providers. There were men who called themselves doctors, pharmacists, dentists, and barbers, but a license was not required to practice. Charles Warren Stoddard, a friend of RLS, wrote in his 1905 journal that Simoneau did not think much of Dr. Heintz. In Simoneau's words: "...he was really no Doctor (MD) at all, but fled from

the office of Infirmarian to California with a kit of surgical implements, the property of the resident physician, just suddenly deceased."

J.P.E. Heintz, "Physician and Surgeon", regularly advertised his office in the local newspaper, first at the Leese House, next at Girardin's Lodging House, and then somewhere on Alvarado St. It's hard to say if RLS respected Heintz as a doctor because his letters to friends back home never mentioned the medical treatment. Instead, RLS wrote of enjoying morning coffee with the little doctor and lodging with the doctor and his wife in their splendid rooms. He repeated the refrain: "lodge with Dr. Heintz, take meals with Simoneau" to several friends as if wanting to reassure everyone back home that he was in good hands.

A letter to his oldest friend Charles Baxter, however, written in mid-October and labeled "Private and Confidential", sang a very different tune. He confessed he had been running a fever, had burning raw spots on his face, and could barely eat or work for very long without lying down in bed. There was no word of Dr. Heintz. Was RLS really lodging with the doctor, and if so, why was he in this distress? The reason can easily be explained by the condition of the doctor's wife: Clementina was in the eighth month of her first pregnancy and none too pleased with the presence of the sickly Scot. Who could blame her? Baby Elizabeth was born November 17, 1879, and after that, RLS never mentioned Heintz again, never corresponded with him, and never recalled him in his written memories of Monterey.

Fortunately, RLS was in good hands. Sometime in late September, Jules Simoneau took RLS to find an affordable (cheap) room at the Girardin's, which was just a short walk from the restaurant. Since no meals were provided at the French House, it benefitted both proprietors to share customers. Simoneau was a rare find for Stevenson. He had opened a pharmacy in San Francisco in the late 1860s and may have had a drugstore in Virginia City. The University of Nantes, which Simoneau likely attended, had a medical school which specialized in pharmaceutical studies. Prior to his move to Monterey in 1872, Simoneau further demonstrated his knowledge of science by working as engineer in a steam soda works. He was clearly intelligent, well-educated, and a man of many talents, although making money was not one of them.

Simoneau's choice of profession in Monterey as chef and maître d' suited his genial personality; he enjoyed playing host, chess, and flute and embraced the practice of accepting credit since many of his customers, like RLS, were hard-up for cash. He developed a close friendship and fatherly concern for Stevenson, such as noticing when the young man's appetite waned and finding mild morsels he could eat. When pleurisy struck in early December and RLS was absent from meals for several days, Simoneau went to check on him at the French House and made certain he ate.

However, disclosing that Simoneau was his "doctor" would not have been reassuring to his friends back home; once in a letter to Sidney Colvin, RLS described Simoneau as a "stranded fifty-eight year old wreck of a good-hearted dissipated" Frenchman.

Fanny's sister Nellie especially admired Simoneau's Mexican wife, Martina, for her "native good sense" whose "kind and skillful hand prepared the broth and smoothed the pillow." One letter hinted at the Simoneaus' manner of treatment: "sweating" and "aconite"—the first, a technique for cooling a feverish body, the second, a plant containing chemicals which produced a "peculiar and delicious sense of being born again." The garden at the Simoneau house on Van Buren Street showcased an abundance of flowers and plants; some were medicinal herbs known to native people and pharmaceutical students alike. It should be noted that the healthcare establishment today cautions in using acotine since it can be poisonous.



In 1881, Jules Simoneau closed his restaurant and left Monterey, spending a few years with his wife's family in Baja California. Dr. Heintz had opened a pharmacy on Alvarado Street and may have been relieved to learn that a fellow Frenchman with pharmaceutical training was leaving town. When Simoneau returned to Monterey, he did not re-open his famous restaurant. Instead, he and Martina continued to cook and supported themselves by selling tamales and seashell-covered frames to guests at the Hotel Del Monte. Later Simoneau peddled tamales as a street vendor, walking between Monterey and Pacific Grove. His last years were spent welcoming visitors from far and wide who admired his friendship with RLS and wanted to see firsthand the letters and autographed first editions sent by his literary friend.

Dr. Heintz had a different fate. In October 1885, he was summoned to the Hotel Del Monte to check on the celebrity Josh Billings, who died suddenly in the doctor's presence; years later in his book Cannery Row, John Steinbeck recalled the indignity felt by the townspeople when Dr. Heintz botched the embalming of this popular humorist. In the 1890s, the doctor ventured into real estate and purchased dozens of lots in downtown Monterey and surrounding neighborhoods. He built a fine brick building on Alvarado Street which was named the Heintz Block. In the 1900 Census, his wife and children were listed as residents of Monterey, but not the doctor. Soon afterwards, Heintz filed for divorce in San Francisco, and his wife counter-filed claiming her husband had deserted her. The Monterey newspaper included his name on lists of tax delinquencies as well as court summons and forced property sales. San Francisco papers carried stories about Dr. J. P. E. Heintz embroiled in law suits related to medical bills and mining company stock.

Daughter Elizabeth, born during Stevenson's stay in Monterey, married Dr. Walter Teaby, and in 1904, he opened his medical practice in the Heintz building, a structure still standing today -- in part. Once remodeled into the Rio Theater in the 1940s, the building now houses the popular Alvarado Street Brewery which serves its happy customers medicine of a different kind.

The RLS Club of Monterey was invited to contribute an essay for the Centenary Celebration of the Robert Louis Stevenson Club of Edinburgh, Scotland. It was included with sixty others in an anthology titled Fortunate Voyager, published in 2021. Here is the essay by Monica Hudson, Lindy Perez, and Elizabeth Anderson

Stevenson has a Home in Monterey

The Pacific licks all other oceans out of hand; there is no place but the Pacific Coast to hear eternal roaring surf. When I get to the top of the woods behind Monterey, I can hear the seas breaking all round over ten or twelve miles of coast from near Carmel on my left, . . . and away to the right along the sands of Monterey to Castroville and the mouth of the Salinas.

-RLS letter to Henley, October/November 1879

The mighty Pacific Ocean, dramatic scenery, fascinating cultures, and supportive friendships that he found in Monterey influenced the future travels and writings of Robert Louis Stevenson. He turned his keen observation to the local landscapes, history, and peoples to capture a vision still seen today. We who know and love this place think, "He understood us. Monterey looks and feels so much like his descriptions."

Stevenson's brief stay in Monterey during the fall of 1879 was a gift to our small coastal community. Many visitors include Monterey on their itinerary to see the dunes and craggy coastlines, which resemble settings described in Treasure Island. And, just as his first book lives on in popular culture, so do beliefs about Monterey as a place of mystery, drama, and buried treasure.

For decades, pilgrims have walked in the footsteps of RLS: from the adobes in historic Monterey to the goat ranch in Carmel Valley, from the church retreat in Pacific Grove to the old mission of Carmel, and from the lighthouse at Point Pinos to the windswept beaches curving around the bay. We appreciate his skill in recording these memorable places; he understood the importance of our history and cared about our future. The Monterey Peninsula's historic sites are now some of the most celebrated and best preserved in the American West.

But his time in Monterey was not easy. Soon after his arrival in Monterey, he was confronted with Fanny's ambivalence about divorce, which caused him an agonizing wait before their marriage. Fortunately, while Fanny made up her mind, Montereyans befriended and supported the affable visitor from Scotland who told stories so well. As a traveler in a weakened state of health who had risked his family's support, he had to rely on strangers. Venturing out to camp in the Carmel Valley, he fell severely ill, and a couple of goat ranchers found and took care of him until he was fit to travel again. Back in Monterey, acquaintances became close friends.

A place does not clearly exist for the imagination, till we have moved elsewhere. ... Hence it is that a place grows upon our fancy after we have left it. -RLS, Simoneau's at Monterey

Stevenson goes on to describe the warmth and company Jules Simoneau offered at his small restaurant near the French Hotel. At his table sat a French baker, an Italian fisherman, a Portuguese whaler, and a "polysyllabic" newspaper editor. Along with shared meals, these friends supplied lively conversation and—unbeknownst to Stevenson—a little money to support his writing. Among his friends in Monterey, character was more important than money, occupation, formal education, or family background: kindness, congeniality, and honesty mattered. His intimate correspondence with Jules Simoneau is a lasting testament to the bonds he made with those who shared his optimism.

His future stepson Lloyd Osbourne noticed Louis' talk was all about the people he was meeting in Monterey. It was in Stevenson's nature to look past class and race and perceive the inherent value in people he met. He saw and admired Indians singing Gregorian music in the ruined Carmel Mission, Chinese practicing ancient customs in a segregated village, and Mexicans living with grace and decorum despite their declining status in the land that once was their own. The diverse population of Monterey today recognizes Stevenson as a man ahead of his time, believing in the unique contributions of every culture.

Despite physical and financial hardships during his stay, RLS gained insight into his own strengths and vulnerabilities. He came to feel he had done the right thing striking out on his own. He found the ability to persevere. We still admire his acceptance of poor health and suffering and his will to survive.

I don't know if I am the same man I was in Europe.....my head went round and looks another way now; for when I found myself over here in a new land, and all the past uprooted in the one tug, and I neither feeling glad nor sorry, I got my last lesson about mankind... that I could have so felt astonished me beyond description. There is a wonderful callousness in human nature which enables us to live. -RLS letter to Gosse, October 8, 1879

The rambling old adobe where Stevenson lodged was then called the French Hotel. Fortunately, the building was spared demolition, the fate of many neglected historic adobes. In 1949 the Stevenson House was opened under California State Park ownership as a museum dedicated to the memory of Robert Louis Stevenson. It is home to the largest collection of RLS' personal possessions found anywhere.



Monterey RLS Club members and other volunteer docents greet visitors seven months of the year and share our affection for RLS—the man and his writing. As ambassadors for his legacy, we find ourselves welcoming people from all walks of life

and from countries all over the world. We love to share the many reasons he continues to be an inspiration today, and visitors teach us what he means to them. Today, as well as during his lifetime, his vulnerable and rebellious nature appeals to those who see something of themselves in his struggles and aspirations. His kindness, gentle humor, modesty, moral integrity, advocacy for the underdog, and courage are evident both in his stories and in the accounts of those who knew him.

Spreading the word about Stevenson naturally generates positive connections and lasting friendships here and abroad. An experienced docent explains it this way, "What drew me in is his life story. He could have been a snob because of his family background; he could have been consumed with self-pity because of his poor health; but instead, he dealt with his setbacks and pursued his dream of living an adventurous and creative life. Once we start talking about him, people want to know more and more. We encourage them to rediscover Stevenson and his writing; he lives on here."

His best story, of course, is his own life, and the most fascinating and enduring character is Robert Louis Stevenson himself. RLS has made storytellers of us all.

RLS Books at Custom House Store and Stevenson House

Remember to ask for a 10% member discount when purchasing RLS books at these venues. They include his novels, the complete collection of short stories, and *Children's Garden or Verses*. They also carry Isobel Field's book, *This Life I've Loved*; she was RLS's step-daughter.

"Zoom Salons:" A New Approach for 2022 by Mimi Sheridan

From its early days, one of the signature activities of the RLS Club has been our Salons, where we meet in members' homes to discuss Stevenson's work and enjoy conversation and treats. Since these intimate Salons have not been possible in recent years, the Club now uses Zoom to reach out to members worldwide. Two Zoom Salons have already been held this year.

The first session of The RLS Hour, held on February 27, focused on Barry Menikoff's essay "Stevenson in Time," which was featured in the recently published anthology *Fortunate Voyager: A Celebration of Robert Louis Stevenson*. Twenty people participated, including two members from Scotland. The benefits of Zoom quickly became apparent, as Barry, an emeritus professor of English at the University of Hawaii, was able to share his insights—a wonderful addition to our discussion.

This essay focuses on Stevenson's staying power over the decades. Not only is he firmly embedded in popular culture, but he continues to reward readers of all ages and inclinations—through his novels, his short stories and his poetry. Much of the group discussion focused on *Kidnapped*, which demonstrates his extraordinary skill in capturing the sense of place. The novel vividly portrays the unique atmosphere of the Highlands and the pervasiveness of their complex and violent history to the culture.

The value of Zoom technology was once again apparent in the discussion on April 23. Sixteen people participated, with two from out of state and six from Scotland. The event was timed to encourage participation from both sides of the Atlantic, starting at 11 AM here and at 7 PM in Scotland.

The topic was Stevenson's poem "Mother and Daughter," his reflection on the contrast between his wife, Fanny, and his stepdaughter, Belle, and a typical English woman. He expresses his appreciation for them, with their deep tans from the Samoan sun, free-flowing garments, and graceful movements.

Elizabeth Anderson kicked off the discussion by reading the poem. A lively exchange of views followed, ranging from the structure of the poem to relations within the Stevenson family. Many noted how he expresses himself more freely in poetry than in prose—indeed, sensuality and his fondness for women suffuse this poem.

The next RLS Hour is scheduled for July 23. See below for the reading assignment.

Reading Assignment and Quiz for The RLS Hour, July 23, 11 am (Pacific Time)

The next Zoom Salon will be a discussion of *The Wrecker*, Part 1 (Prologue through Chapter 11).

This is a novel written by RLS in collaboration with his stepson Lloyd Osbourne and published in 1892. The hero is a young American learning about real life in Paris and San Francisco. By the end of Chapter 11, readers should be able to name the following:

1. Fictional State where our hero was born
2. Scottish surname of his mother's family
3. Nickname for hyperactive friend Jim Pinkerton
4. Wrecked brig near Midway Island

Part 2 will be discussed via Zoom on September 24.

RLS Club Newsletter co-editors: Donna Gibson and Lindy Perez

We welcome your stories and ideas for future editions.