Ninety years ago a small group of literature enthusiasts, historians, and writers gathered in Richmond to commemorate the opening of Virginia’s first literary shrine and museum, the Edgar Allan Poe Shrine. Among those in attendance were Virginia Governor E. Lee Trinkle, sculptor Edward Valentine, writers Ellen Glasgow and James Branch Cabell, and the descendants of Edgar Allan Poe’s friends and family. Letters of congratulation came from scholars on both sides of the Atlantic. Poe manuscripts and artifacts were gathered from several public and private collections for a display in the Poe Shrine’s Old Stone House. That small display included pieces that would soon become the core of the Poe Museum’s world renowned collection.

In 2012, the Poe Museum is celebrating nine decades of promoting Poe’s legacy with major events and exhibits to kick off the next ninety years. The celebration began in January with Poe’s birthday party and the opening of the first exhibition in a generation of James Carling’s 43 original illustrations for “The Raven.” In April, the Poe Museum opened a major exhibit of dozens of Poe’s letters and manuscripts gathered from seven different collections. Virginia Delegate Jennifer McClellan (above), who was instrumental in passing the 2009 General Assembly resolution honoring Poe, was the guest of honor at the exhibit opening and Unhappy Hour. In celebration of this important milestone, the Museum has also hosted garden talks, performances, films, and book signings, but more exciting events and exhibits are still to come. Be sure to check the last page for the schedule. Right: A youngster clutching her Poe bobble head while waiting for a trolley tour of Poe’s Richmond at the Poe birthday.

Major Discovery Made at the Poe Museum

The Poe Museum is pleased to announce the discovery of the only known manuscript for Edgar Allan Poe’s classic poem, “To Helen.” Though Poe scholar Thomas Ollive Mabbott referred to “To Helen” as “Poe’s finest lyric,” no manuscript for the poem was known to have survived until a transcription of the first stanza was found in the album of Edgar Poe’s cousin Amelia Poe. Poe described the poem in an 1848 letter to Sarah Helen Whitman as “the lines I had written, in my passionate boyhood, to the first, purely ideal love of my soul — to the Helen Stanard [sic] of whom I told you.”

“To Helen” is of especial interest to Richmonders because Poe dedicated it to the Richmond matron Jane Stith Craig Stanard, who encouraged the young boy to write poetry. Stanard’s birthplace stands only a few blocks from the Poe Museum, and her grave lies at nearby Shockoe Hill Cemetery. Until July 11, the piece will be on display as part of the exhibit From Poe’s Quill: The Letters and Manuscripts of Edgar Allan Poe. Thereafter, it will be displayed as part of the museum’s permanent collection.
Spring Events Bring Literature to Life

On April 26, 2012, the museum celebrated its 90th birthday with a 1920s themed Unhappy Hour. For such an auspicious occasion we wanted to do something extra special so we managed to arrange for some 1920s authors to travel through time and regale guests with tales of their lives and work as well as their interest in Poe. Interpreters portraying F. Scott Fitzgerald, Zelda Fitzgerald, Gertrude Stein, H.P. Lovecraft and James Branch Cabell were all on hand to pay tribute to Poe and to mingle with guests. Many thanks to our wonderful living history actors -- James Ebersole, Sarah Wylie, Madeline Lovegrove, John Curry and Jonathan Orcutt -- that helped us bring them to life!

In addition to our 1920s authors, State Delegate Jennifer McClellan was kind enough to pay us a visit and was gracious enough to help us out in acting as a judge for our 1920s costume contest (along with Scott and Sandi Bergman, owners of Haunts of Richmond). Guests really got into the spirit of the event, and the judges had a tough time reaching a decision about a winner. Some of the entrants are pictured below. 1920s jazz music by the John Winn Duo added to the ambiance of the evening and a wonderful time was had by all. We would like to thank Party Perfect, Bygones, 2113, Legend Brewing Company, The Dirty Apron, Fruit 66, and CultureWorks for making the event possible. – MAA

May Unhappy Hour had extra “bite”

The Poe Museum celebrated its second Unhappy Hour of the season by putting the spotlight on “Berenice”, Poe’s 1835 tale of love, obsession and dentistry. The centerpiece of the evening was a dramatic performance of Poe’s tale produced in cooperation with Haunts of Richmond. The characters (pictured above right) in the story were played by Ryan Lee (as “Egaeus”) and Amber Boice (as “Berenice”). The Poe Museum was honored that Jeff Jerome of the Edgar Allan Poe House and Museum in Baltimore, MD came out to the event and provided an informative introduction to the performances of the story. Museum docent, Jessy Mullins educated and horrified guests with a brief presentation about 19th century dental practices. Rattlemouth (pictured above), Richmond’s own world groove powerhouse, provided the evening’s musical accompaniment. – MAA

Photos on this page by Melanie Armstrong
Is One of These Students the Next Edgar Poe?

Nine of the nation’s most talented young writers will be spending a week in Richmond this summer for the fifth Edgar Allan Poe Young Writers’ Conference sponsored by the Poe Museum and directed by Edgar™ Award winning author Dr. Harry Lee Poe, President of the Poe Foundation. This elite group of high school students hails from eight different states from Massachusetts to Arizona. They will spend a week perfecting their craft, meeting professional writers, and learning about the life and influence of Edgar Allan Poe. One of the past years’ conferees enjoyed her experience so much she will be returning this year as an R.A. If you would like to meet some of tomorrow’s great writers before they become famous, join us for a reception at the Poe Museum on June 22 at 7 P.M. when the conferees will read the work they have produced during the program.

Don’t Miss the Chance to See These Treasures

In honor of the Poe Museum's 90th anniversary, the Poe Foundation wanted to host the kind of exhibit that comes around once in ninety years. That major exhibit is From Poe’s Quill: The Letters and Manuscripts of Edgar Allan Poe, a survey of dozens of Poe’s rarely seen letters and manuscripts gathered from seven private and public collections. Highlights of the show include the only complete manuscript for a Poe short story in private hands, the earliest privately owned Poe manuscript, and a letter from Poe to another giant of American Literature---Washington Irving. Just as importantly, the exhibit reunites fragments of two of Poe’s essays. The complete manuscripts were cut apart and given away by Southern Literary Messenger editor John R. Thompson and have been in different collections since as early as 1848.

This exciting exhibit is the closest thing to standing over Poe’s shoulder while he writes. Visitors can experience the rare opportunity of witnessing Poe’s thought process in action as he composes some of his greatest stories and poems. These pieces span the course of Poe’s life--from a poem written when he was only nineteen to a letter written within weeks of his death. This important exhibit was made possible by Poe Foundation Trustee Susan Jaffe Tane. The Poe Foundation would also like to thank the lenders to the exhibit, Michael Deas, Holt Edmunds, Frances Giles, Mitch Kirsner, The Museum of the Macabre, and, once again, Susan Jaffe Tane.  
From Left to Right: “To Zante” Courtesy of Susan Jaffe Tane, Fragment of Letter to Unknown Correspondent Courtesy of Michael Deas, Fragment of Marginalia Courtesy the Poe Museum.
New Members Join Board

The Poe Foundation of the Poe Museum is proud to announce the inclusion of two new members to the board of trustees as well as two new members to its advisory board. The new trustees are Jeff Chapman of RBC Wealth Management and Thomas Camden, head of Special Collections for the Library of Virginia. Both bring years of expertise in their fields—as well as a great deal of enthusiasm—to the board.

Joining the advisory board is the award-winning artist Michael Deas. Not only did Deas write the important book *The Portraits and Daguerreotypes of Edgar Allan Poe*, but he also designed the Edgar Allan Poe U.S. Postage Stamp. The next distinguished new member of the advisory board is Dana Gioia, the poet and former head of the National Endowment for the Arts. His last act as head of the NEA was coming to Richmond in January 2009 for the dedication of the previously mentioned Poe stamp. The board of trustees is honored to have such a distinguished new members.

In other news, it is with reluctance that the board accepted the resignation of long-time member Katherine “Kitty” Smith, whose career as a librarian served her well both as a board member and as the Poe Museum’s curator and librarian. The board wishes Kitty only the best in her future endeavors.

Members-Only Events

In addition to receiving a stylish new Poe Museum tote (see page 5) when they renew their membership this summer, Poe Museum members are also eligible to participate in a number of exciting members-only events. On August 11 and 18 from 9 to midnight the Poe Museum will stay open late for a ghost hunt led by paranormal investigators Spirited History. If ghost hunting is not to your taste, you might enjoy a canal cruise featuring a guided tour of Richmond’s historic canal, which was planned by none other than George Washington. Then, Poe Museum members can take a private guided tour of Richmond’s historic Shockoe Hill Cemetery, the final resting place of John Marshall, Peter Francisco, and several people from Poe’s life. The cemetery is an overlooked treasure that tells the story of the people who shaped Richmond from the Revolutionary War until the end of the nineteenth century. If you are a member, you will be receiving more information in the near future. If you are not a member and would like to become one, call us today at 888-21-EAPOE or visit poemuseum.org/membership to sign up today.

Carling’s Raven Still is Sitting

Due to popular demand, the Poe Museum’s exhibit of James Carling’s masterful illustrations to “The Raven” has been held over until July 29. This is the first time in a generation all 43 original drawings have been on display, so be sure to take advantage of what could be your last opportunity to see them. After the show closes, most of these delicate illustrations will return to storage to protect them from the damaging effects of prolonged exposure to light. Fortunately, Poe Foundation trustee Robert A. Buerlein has sponsored the publication of a beautiful full-color exhibit catalog that is now available in the Poe Museum gift shop and website.

Garden Talk Draws Crowd

Joining the advisory board is the award-winning artist Michael Deas. Not only did Deas write the important book *The Portraits and Daguerreotypes of Edgar Allan Poe*, but he also designed the Edgar Allan Poe U.S. Postage Stamp. The next distinguished new member of the advisory board is Dana Gioia, the poet and former head of the National Endowment for the Arts. His last act as head of the NEA was coming to Richmond in January 2009 for the dedication of the previously mentioned Poe stamp. The board of trustees is honored to have such a distinguished new members.

It is easy to think of the Poe Museum as the four buildings that house its collection of artifacts and memorabilia, but, since its inception, the heart of the museum has been its Enchanted Garden, the Richmond landmark modeled after Poe’s poetry. Richmond architects Baskervill & Noland and renowned landscape architect Charles Gillette were among those who helped shape the garden whose fame has drawn a global audience for decades. Indicative of the fame the garden once knew, no less an artist than Gutzon Borghlum (sculptor of the monuments at Stone Mountain and Mt. Rushmore) offered to sculpt a Poe monument for the garden. On April 29, as the garden turned ninety, landscape architect Drew Harrigan (above) gave a lecture and tour in the garden. In addition to providing an overview of the garden’s history, Harrigan pointed out unusual plant species like the giant boxwoods, a Chinese photinia, and a live oak. A large, enthusiastic audience enjoyed both the talk and the garden, which was especially beautiful as a result of a mild winter and early spring.

Come to the CultSha Xpo

Want a fun and easy way to support the Poe Museum? Come to the CultSha Xpo at the Science Museum of Virginia from 10 to 5 on Saturday, June 23. The expo features free admission to the Science Museum, performances by Richmond area arts and cultural organizations, and an envelope of free money (actually CultSha bucks to donate to any of the seventy arts and cultural organizations represented). The Poe Museum will have a booth at the expo and will be collecting CultSha bucks that we can redeem for real dollars from the sponsoring organization CultureWorks. For more information, please visit richmondculture-works.org.
Thanks to Our Donors

The Poe Foundation’s programs and exhibits would not be possible without the support of our generous donors and members.

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Get This Tote

In the face of the Great Depression, World War II, and multiple recessions, the Poe Museum has thrived for over ninety years because it has always been able to depend on the support of people who believe in the value of literature and of the power of the human imagination to change the world. We would like to thank all those who have made our work possible. As the Poe Museum approaches its centennial, we look forward to working with new supporters who will help the Museum inspire a new generation of readers and writers. To help recruit some of those new supporters, we are launching a summer membership drive with a goal of signing up 500 new or renewing members. As a special incentive for new members, we are offering a special members-only Poe Museum tote bag with each membership. There will also be members-only events and tours you and your friends will not want to miss.
Poe Museum Upcoming Events

Continuing until July 29, 2012
Exhibit: Stormier, Wilder, and More Weird: James Carling’s Illustrations for “The Raven”
This rarely seen series of 43 illustrations produced by English artist James Carling has not been displayed in its entirety since 1975. This might be the last chance in a generation to see these amazing works.

Continuing until July 11, 2012
Exhibit: From Poe’s Quill: Letters and Manuscripts of Poe
Experience this rare opportunity to see priceless manuscript material, some of which is on loan from private collections and have never been publicly displayed.

August 7–September 29, 2012
Exhibit: Hop-Frog
Poe’s classic tale of revenge comes to life in this exhibit brought to you by Quick Pulse Productions.

June 22, 2012, 7 P.M. to 9 P.M.
E. A. Poe Young Writers’ Conference Reading and Reception
Hear some of tomorrow’s great writers, the conferees of this year’s Edgar Allan Poe Young Writers’ Conference, read the work they produced during the conference.

June 28, 2012, 6 P.M. to 9 P.M.
June Unhappy Hour: “The Oval Portrait”
Poe’s tale of beauty and death will be performed throughout the evening will be brought to life through performances, music, artwork, and more in an evening that is not to be missed.