Conference Inspires Writers

For high school students across the country, June is just the beginning of a relaxing summer vacation, but, for a select group of gifted young authors, June is time for the Poe Museum’s annual Edgar Allan Poe Young Writers’ Conference. This year’s conference attracted students from as far away as California and Arizona to spend the week in Richmond learning the craft of writing from professional authors and editors. When not attending seminars or participating in workshops, the attendees took field trips to see the Poe collections at the University of Virginia and the Poe Museum and to visit Poe sites in Charlottesville, Richmond, and Fort Monroe. The week concluded with a reading (right) of the students’ works at the Poe Museum.

If you or someone you know would be interested in attending next summer’s conference, please call the Poe Museum at 888-21-EAPOE or write to info@poemuseum.org.

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Mission: The Poe Museum in Richmond, Virginia interprets the life and influence of Edgar Allan Poe for the education and enjoyment of a global audience.

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Why did Poe visit this house?
Find out on page 4.

Did this man know Edgar Poe?
Find out on page 5.
On October 5 at 1 P.M., the Poe Museum will receive the largest gift in its history, a house. This structure just happens to be the oldest house in Richmond, the Old Stone House. Though we are not exactly certain when it was built, dendrochronology (testing of the tree rings in wood) dates the floorboards to 1754. For over ninety years, the Poe Museum has occupied the house, which remains the property of Preservation Virginia, formerly known as the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities, while the other three buildings in the Poe Museum complex belong to the Poe Foundation.

The history of the Old Stone House is a colorful one. From the 1740s until 1911, the property was owned by the Ege family, who were among the first residents of Richmond. In 1781, one resident, Elizabeth Ege Welsh, claimed to see Benedict Arnold invade and set fire to Richmond from the relative safety of the house. By the 1840s, the house appears in guide books for visitors to the city. Around 1881, the house was rented to R. L. Potter, “The Wheelbarrow Man,” who used it to exhibit an assortment of unusual objects he collected while pushing a wheelbarrow from New York to California and back again. One account says he even displayed a live bear in one of the rooms. In 1894, the house was known as Washington’s Headquarters Antiquarium and Relic Museum, which published a guide book to perpetuate tall tales about how the house had been built by Powhatan, used as a courthouse by Patrick Henry, and used as George Washington’s headquarters during the American Revolution (though he never actually set foot in the city during that war). Some old postcards show the house with a large “Washington’s Headquarters” sign hanging next to the front door.

In 1913, the Ege family lost the property, and Granville Valentine purchased the building to save it from destruction. Valentine, in turn, donated it to the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities, who tried to find someone to rent it. A renter who had intended to use it as an antique store left because the property was being vandalized. Then Archer Jones, owner of the Duplex Envelope Company, approached the APVA with the idea of using the house as a museum of Colonial history. Jones and his wife soon met the Poe collector James Whitty, who wanted to reconstruct the recently demolished office of the Southern Literary Messenger in the junkyard behind the house. In 1921, that idea evolved into using the Messenger bricks and granite to make a Poe Memorial garden in the yard and using the locks, lumber, and hinges from the Messenger building to restore the Old Stone House. The House was then furnished with furniture from Richmond buildings in which Poe lived or worked.

Ninety-one years after the Poe Museum opened, the Old Stone House is still visited by guests from around the world, and the exterior of the house remains virtually unchanged from its appearance recorded in nineteenth century photos. Thanks to Preservation Virginia, this beautiful remnant of Richmond’s Colonial past will finally become a true part of the Poe Museum. The museum has no plans for changes to the structure, which will be protected from significant alterations by an easement with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources. You can attend the historic property transfer and see a selection of artifacts related to the history of the house on Saturday, October 5. Afterwards, Rose Marie Mitchell will be present to sign copies of her new book about the history of the Old Stone House.
Poe Museum’s Legacy of Inspiration

“My mom took me to a Richmond Poe museum,” said writer Kevin Williamson at the Television Critics Association tour last January. “And the walls were red and looked like blood, and they had ‘The Raven’ written on the wall, and you had to follow around to read it. I remember it being (the) most magical day. When I went home, my mom had bought me the collective works of Poe, and I became fascinated with him.” Williamson went on to write hit movies like *Scream* as well as popular television show’s *Dawson’s Creek* and *Vampire Diaries*. This year, the fascination with Poe sparked by a childhood visit to the Poe Museum inspired him to write a Poe-themed series set in Richmond (though not actually filmed here) called *The Following*. The Poe Museum continues to inspire young people. One of the attendees of last year’s Edgar Allan Poe Young Writers’ Conference has just published her first novel.

For over ninety years, the Poe Museum has inspired visitors of all ages. Your next favorite novel could be written by one of the students touring the museum with his or her class this morning. You can help us inspire tomorrow’s great writers today by making a tax-deductible donation to the Poe Museum by visiting poemuseum.org/membership or by mailing a check to Poe Museum/1914 East Main Street/ Richmond VA 23223.

Positively Poe Conference Sheds New Light on Poe

Everyone knows Edgar Allan Poe is the Master of the Macabre, a haunted poet who wanders the cemeteries at night in search of inspiration. Everyone is wrong. That is why the Poe Museum hosted the first Positively Poe Conference in June. The conference attracted an international group of Poe scholars to the University of Virginia to explore Poe’s many positive contributions to art, literature, and science. In addition a number of papers about Poe’s pioneering cosmological theories, the speakers also discussed the latest research into Poe’s character, his friends, and his family.

The conference took place only a short distance from Poe’s dorm room on the West Range, and the confernees attended a picnic on the Ragged Mountain (left), the setting for Poe’s “A Tale of the Ragged Mountains.” At the opening night dinner in the Rotunda Room, renowned Poe scholar Benjamin Fisher spoke about his adventures in Poe research. Afterwards, Poe (as portrayed by Rob Velella) performed one of Poe’s comedies for the appreciative attendees.

Thanks to a generous travel scholarship funded by Poe Museum trustee Susan Jaffe Tane, who also lectured during the conference, nine foreign Poe scholars were able to attend. With the help of this conference, Poe’s far-reaching contributions to our culture will come to be more fully appreciated while, with any luck, the caricature of the morbid, death obsessed Poe gradually fades from memory.
Membership Has Rewards

Have you renewed your membership this year? Now is the perfect time to join or renew because the Poe Museum is about to offer some special tours especially for its members. On November 16 at 1 P.M., members will be given a special tour of Monumental Church (below). Designed by Robert Mills as a memorial to the seventy-two victims of the 1811 Richmond Theater fire, the church was completed in 1814. Among those who contributed to the church’s construction was Poe’s foster father John Allan, who owned pew eighty. This is where the young Edgar Poe worshipped with his foster parents. Since the church’s congregation moved to the suburbs in the 1960s, the building is now maintained by the Historic Richmond Foundation, which does not open it for tours on a regular basis. Our members will be among the lucky few privileged to tour this historic gem from the architect who designed the Washington Monument in our nation’s capital.

Also in November, Poe Museum members will also tour Petersburg’s Hiram Haines Coffee House (above, right), the building in which Poe is said to have spent his honeymoon. Our members will be lucky enough to take a special behind-the-scenes tour with the owner Jeff Abugel, whose years of research into the building’s history and Poe’s association with Petersburg editor and poet Hiram Haines resulted in the book Edgar Allan Poe’s Petersburg.

On November 16 at 8 P.M., members are invited to a late-night paranormal investigation in the Poe Museum’s legendary Enchanted Garden, where rumor has it a little boy plays during wedding ceremonies. Paranormal investigators Spirited History will be leading the group and instructing participants in the use of their equipment. For more information or to renew your membership, call 888-21-EAPOE or visit poemuseum.org/membership.

And the Winner is...

For National Poetry Month, the Poe Museum sponsored a poetry contest. The winning poem was submitted by Ryan McLellan of Waltham, Massachusetts. Many thanks to all those who submitted poems.

“Family Portrait”

Your bonnet rots and my time piece stopped a long time ago. We became a faded image on a mantel. My father posed like his father before him, a stone expression and thumbs in his belt loops. His wife — not my mother — stood still and did not speak. My uncle twisted his mustache like a man hatching some sinister plot. You must have been so uncomfortable in that corset, bound, while the men wore the billowy suits and smoked the cigars. How many of these dreadful photographs did you have to pose for? I can’t see through the sepia anymore; cataracts are brown and grey. A group-shot taken the last time we got together; a funeral. We all die young in this family. We look away from the lens like we can’t be bothered with beauty yet we all put a hand on our hips, puff up our chests and stand still when told to do so. We died in these frames, lived out our last days under dust in forgotten parlors but we knew we could be immortal if we struck the right pose.

New Exhibit Coming

Many people already know Poe wrote horror stories and mysteries, but the Poe Museum’s next temporary exhibit will explore Poe’s influence on another one of literature’s most popular genres, Science Fiction. Visitors may be surprised to see how far-reaching Poe’s influence was and how many authors cited him as a their inspiration. No less a founder of the genre than Jules Verne referred to him as “the Leader of the Cult of the Unusual.” This fascinating show opens October 17 and runs until December 31.

Author Will Speak at Museum

Join the Poe Museum on Thursday, October 17 from 6-8 P.M. for a book signing by Trish Foxwell, author of A Visitor’s Guide to the Literary South. At this free event, Foxwell will speak and sign copies of her book that details literary landmarks in the South including Edgar Allan Poe’s connection to Richmond, Charlottesville and Charleston, South Carolina on October 17th.

Ms. Foxwell’s byline has appeared in the Tennessean, the Boston Globe, the LA Times, San Diego Union Tribune, Gannett Newspapers and the Christian Science Monitor among others. She is also the author of "Historic Hotels & Hideaways." Her literary journey takes travelers to literary landmarks stretching from Virginia to Louisiana.
Earlier this week we received an email from a gentleman informing us that the title of the Poe Museum’s recent exhibit “Poe in Paris” was incorrect because Poe never lived in Paris. On the surface, our correspondent is right, but we would refer him to Stéphane Mallarmé (1842-1898 right), the French poet who wrote the poem “Le Tombeau d’Edgar Poe” to honor the American author on the occasion of the dedication of Poe’s long awaited monument at Westminster Burying Grounds in Baltimore. Roughly translated, the poem begins, “As to Himself at last eternity changes him…” Mallarmé seems to believe death had not ended Poe’s career but merely allowed him to become his true self. If Edgar Allan Poe spent most of his life in the United States, Mallarmé’s Poe really came to life in France, particularly in Paris, where he was celebrated by the city’s leading authors and artists. It was in Paris that poet Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867) considered him a brother, and science fiction novelist Jules Verne (1828-1905) wrote a sequel to Poe’s only novel. Many of France’s most innovative writers and visual artists were inspired by Poe’s stories, poems, and essays. Even Poe’s philosophy, expressed in essays including Eureka and “The Philosophy of Composition,” grew to be as influential as his fiction. It is no wonder the painter Eugene Delacroix (1798-1863) referred to Poe in his journal as not only a writer but also a “singular and very original poet and philosopher.”

Different artists and writers responded to Poe’s works in different ways. While Baudelaire’s poetry explored Poe’s themes and cultivated his public image, Mallarmé focused on developing Poe’s poetic theories. The painter Edouard Manet (1832-1888) produced illustrations to Mallarmé’s translation of Poe’s “The Raven” while artist Odilon Redon (1840-1916) interpreted Poe’s ideas and imagery in a less literal way in his series A Edgar Poe.

Gathered from the collections of Dr. Harry Lee Poe, James Vacca, The Free Library of Philadelphia, the University of Virginia, and the Poe Museum, “Poe in Paris” featured works by the artists and writers inspired or influenced by Poe to become the leading innovators of their time.

Thanks to the way French intellectuals cultivated an appreciation of Poe, his works have come to be celebrated around the globe. In fact, Mallarmé’s Poe is a world traveler, as much at home in Paris or Prague as he is in Richmond or Philadelphia. The exhibit has proved so popular the Poe Museum extended its run until September 28. A special closing reception Unhappy Hour was held on September 26 with live music by Margot MacDonald and delicious French food courtesy of La Parisienne Bistro and Café and Poe Foundation Trustee Jeffrey Chapman.

Guests still ask about the Raven Room. For sixty years, James Carling’s fantastic illustrations for “The Raven” occupied the walls of a dedicated gallery in the Poe Museum. The Raven Room was a favorite with generations of Poe Museum visitors even though Carling’s complete set of original illustrations has only been on display once since 1975. In celebration of the Poe Museum’s ninetieth anniversary, the original illustrations were taken out of storage for an exhibit in 2012. Renewed interest in the illustrations has encouraged us to publish, preserve, and promote this amazing artwork. Plans are underway to photograph and publish the complete set for the first time in full color. We are also planning to assess the state of preservation and to halt the deterioration of the works. Finally, we would like to share the drawings with other institutions interested in exhibiting them. Accomplishing these goals will require a great deal of funding, so the Poe Museum is reaching out to new supporters with a campaign on kickstarter.com. At no charge to the museum, Charles Ryan and Associates has produced a video, promotional materials, and an advertising to promote the kickstarter campaign to the widest possible audience. All donations will be made directly on the website. You can visit the campaign at bit.ly/jcarling to learn more about the campaign and to donate.
October 3, 2013, 6-9 P.M.
**Poe Memorial Service**
Each year the Poe Museum marks the anniversary of Poe’s death by putting the “fun” back in “funeral.” Join us this year in the Poe Museum’s Enchanted Garden for an evening with Poe’s first and last fiancée, Elmira Shelton, who will tell us about ill-fated romance with Poe. Admission is by donation.

October 17, 2013, 6-8 P.M.
**Book Signing for *A Visitor’s Guide to the Literary South***
Meet Trish Foxwell for a book talk and signing for her new guide to literary sites in the south. Admission is free.

October 24, 2013, 6-9 P.M.
**October Unhappy Hour: “The Spirits of the Dead”**
Come to the Poe Museum for the only Halloween party in Richmond with real ghosts. Paranormal investigators will be on hand to show some of the evidence they have captured on site. Guests can also enjoy live music, dramatic readings, a costume contest, and a cash bar. Admission is by optional $5 donation.

October 27, 2013, 2-5 P.M.
**Poe’s Pumpkin Patch**
Make sure your kids grow up weird by bringing them to the Poe Museum for an afternoon of Poe-inspired fun and games. Admission is $5.

Check our website at www.poemuseum.org/events or call 888-21-EAPOE for all the latest updates on events and exhibits.