

A Quiet Bequest

William and Julia Marlatt's gift to the museum's collection and library was both unexpected and magnificent

Edward Burne-Jones (British, 1833–1898). Two woodcuts, first and last text pages (left and right), from *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, published by William Morris, Kelmscott Press, 1896. Ingalls Library, Bequest of Julia Morgan Marlatt. Eschewing machine-made materials, Morris used a paper produced from unbleached linen rags by the English firm Joseph Batchelor & Sons, a black ink from Gebrüder Jänecke of Hannover, Germany, and high-quality vellum for text and bindings by Henry Band in Middlesex.



William H. Marlatt (1869–1937) and his wife Julia Morgan Marlatt (1873–1939) quietly amassed a collection of fine books, paintings, etchings, and manuscripts. Upon Julia's death, a complete set of works printed by William Morris (1834–1896) at the Kelmscott Press was given to the museum's Ingalls Library. Morris founded the storied press at the age of 57. It existed for only seven years, from 1891 to 1898, but in that time produced limited editions of 53 exquisitely designed books, aiming to exceed the quality of 15th-century incunabula.

Morris devoted painstaking care to all aspects of production, including the paper, typeface, letterspacing, and position of the printed matter on the page. He used an Albion handpress, which produced more beautiful results than a machine press and was capable of economically printing limited editions of several hundred copies. Morris designed three type fonts for the Kelmscott: Golden, modeled after Roman typefaces used by the 15th-century Venetian printer Nicolaus Jenson; Troy, simplifying the old Gothic typeface; and Chaucer, used in the creation of *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, which scholars and collectors consistently rate among the most beautiful books ever produced.

Unfortunately, little documentation survives regarding the Marlatts or their books. We know that more than 300 book titles were given to the museum, along with works of art and a bequest of nearly \$1 million to be used to purchase works of art and library materials. The museum archives do contain one invoice from the London bookseller Bernard Quaritch, Ltd., dated October 3, 1917, recording the purchase of the Kelmscott Press's *The Golden Legend*, volume 1.

FULL ARTICLE

Read a longer version of this article with more research detail at www.clevelandart.org/research.

Raised an only child in Lebanon, Ohio, William Marlatt graduated from the National Normal University in Lebanon in 1889 and Cincinnati Law School in 1890. He taught school in Alabama for two years, then entered law school at Yale University, graduating cum laude in 1892. He was admitted to the Bar of Ohio and formed a partnership with Francis Wilcox Treadway, a Yale classmate. The Treadway & Marlatt firm was located in the Society for Savings Building on Cleveland's Public Square. From 1903 to 1922, Marlatt served as U.S. commissioner for the Northern District of Ohio. By 1924 the partnership had moved to the new Union Commerce Building at the corner of East Ninth Street and Euclid Avenue, but on December 24, 1925, Treadway died unexpectedly. Marlatt never formed another partnership but continued to practice, sometimes with associates.

Marlatt served on various corporate and nonprofit boards and belonged to the Church of the Covenant, Union Club, and Hermit Club, and in 1909 served as president of the Ohio Society of the Sons of the American Revolution. He died suddenly in the Shenandoah Hotel in Martinsburg, West Virginia, on June 21, 1937, while he and his wife were returning from a trip to the Great Smoky Mountains. Both he and Mrs. Marlatt are buried in Cleveland's Lake View Cemetery.

Marlatt's colleague Edwin E. Miller described him as "a good lawyer, a natural born trader, and a rather imposing figure with his shock of white hair. His sterling character, clear judgment, high sense of honor and wise counsel, and his cheerful and friendly disposition made him beloved by all."

Born in Cleveland, Julia Katherine Morgan was one of three sisters. She attended Hathaway Brown School and married in 1899. A *Cleveland Press* article published on August 18, 1939, shortly after her suicidal death, describes her as "a quiet, retiring person who disliked any suggestion of ostentation." Edwin Miller paid tribute: "She was a thrifty housewife, and by her advice and encouragement the couple were able to amass a combined fortune of more than one million dollars at the time of her death. Her husband . . . did 90% of his investing in his wife's name." Nearly \$1 million of the estate went to the museum.

The Marlatt bequest was a surprise. In a letter dated August 21, 1939, to director William Milliken (who was traveling in Europe), curator of paintings Henry Francis wrote: "I'm sure you suffered brain fever when you got my cable of last Friday, much as we all did here. The only . . . information we have on the Marlatts is their ten dollar, and later twenty-five dollar memberships. Of those trustees I have talked to, Mr. Clark [Harold T. Clark] is the only one with more than a cursory acquaintance. Mr. Clark saw the executors who said the lady had been retiring always; used to frequent the Museum Sunday afternoons with her husband and watch quietly the enjoyment of others."

In addition to the Kelmscott collection and other books, several paintings came to the museum, including John Henry Twachtman's *Deserted Wharf (The Old Mill as Cos Cob)*, Frederick Gottwald's *Italian Landscape*, and Henry Ward Ranger's *The Lone Sentinel*. Other works of art included a Rembrandt etching titled *The Hundred Guilder Print* and two French books of hours. 🏠



The Marlatts' Cleveland Heights home on Fairmount Boulevard

The excerpts from biographical sketches by Edwin Miller and the letter from Henry Francis are from the CMA archives.

INGALLS LIBRARY

Open to all members 18 years and older, Tuesday–Friday 10:00–5:00.

Open to the public Wednesday 10:00–5:00.

Ongoing book sale during library regular hours. Members receive a 15% discount on these purchases.

Your experience at the Cleveland Museum of Art is enriched by the benefits and privileges of membership. When you become a member you help the museum continue to be a world of great art for everyone. Benefits include access to all library services, from researching the auction catalogues to using other online resources. The reference staff is available by phone, in person, and by e-mail to assist you. Call 216-707-2530 or visit library.clevelandart.org and click on "Ask a Librarian."

STARTING OCTOBER 15

A selection of Kelmscott Press books will be on exhibit in the museum's newly renovated arts and education center, opposite the entrance to the Ingalls Library.