

## A Quiet Bequest

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

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William H. Marlatt (1869–1937) quietly amassed a collection of finely printed books, paintings, etchings, and manuscripts at his Cleveland Heights home at 3052 Fairmount Boulevard. Among the objects given to the museum's Ingalls Library upon the death of his wife, Julia Morgan Marlatt (1873–1939), was a complete set of works printed by William Morris at the Kelmscott Press.

William Morris (1834–1896) undertook his most famous venture at the age of 57. The Kelmscott Press existed for only seven years, from 1891 to 1898, but produced limited editions of 53 books of great beauty and design. The elegance of the Kelmscott books lay in the design of their ornaments, type fonts, and page arrangement. Morris set out to prove that the high standards of the past could be repeated, even surpassed, in the present. His aim with the Kelmscott Press was to exceed the quality of 15th-century incunabula.

Morris's main priority was that each book be seen as a whole. This meant devoting painstaking care to all aspects of production, including the paper, typeface, letterspacing, and position of the printed matter on the page. He returned to the use of an

Albion handpress, which produced more beautiful results than a machine press and was capable of economically printing limited editions of several hundred copies. Eschewing machine-made materials, Morris used a paper produced solely from unbleached linen rags manufactured by the English firm Joseph Batchelor & Sons, a black ink produced by Gebrüder Jänecke of Hannover, Germany, and high-quality vellum for text and bindings handcrafted by Henry Band in Middlesex.

Morris designed three type fonts for the Kelmscott Press. The Golden font, modeled after the strong Roman typefaces used by 15th-century Venetian printer Nicolaus Jenson, was Morris's first Kelmscott font. The Troy font soon followed. Using the traditional and often difficult-to-read Gothic typeface as a base, Morris eliminated the contractions and the majority of tied letters to create a beautiful, easy-to-read typeface. The last type font, Chaucer, differed from the Troy font in size only and was used in the creation of *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, the most renowned title in the Kelmscott bibliography. Scholars and collectors consistently place the Kelmscott edition of *Chaucer* in the category of most beautiful books.

Unfortunately, little documentation survives regarding either the book collection or the Marlatts. We know from library accession records that more than 300 titles were given to the Ingalls Library as part of the gift, along with works of art and a bequest of nearly \$1 million to be used to purchase works of art for the museum's collection and materials for the museum's library. The only stipulation on the bequest was that no work by local artists could be purchased with the funds. One invoice survives from the London bookseller Bernard Quaritch, Ltd., dated October 3, 1917, for the purchase of the Kelmscott Press's *The Golden Legend*, volume 1.

William H. Marlatt, born on September 19, 1869, in Lebanon, Ohio, was the only child of Henry Hartford Marlatt (1841–1880) and Hester A. Walker (1845–1898). He graduated from the National Normal University in Lebanon (1886–89) and Cincinnati Law School (1889–90). Upon graduation, he taught school in Midway, Alabama, for two years. Marlatt subsequently was accepted into law school at Yale University, graduating cum laude in 1892, when 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. In 1901 the partners co-authored *The Mechanics' Lien Law of the State of Ohio, including the Liens of Contractors, Material Men, Subcontractors and Manual Laborers, and Liens upon Railroads, with Pleading, Practice, Evidence and Form* (Cincinnati: Robert Clarke Co., 1901). From 1903 to 1922, Marlatt served as U.S. commissioner for the Northern District of Ohio.

Marlatt continued to prosper and by 1924 the Treadway & Marlatt law partnership had moved to the newly constructed Union Commerce Building at the corner of East Ninth Street and Euclid Avenue. On December 24, 1925, Treadway died unexpectedly. Marlatt never formed another partnership but did practice law with a number of associates, many of whom were subsequent beneficiaries of his wife's estate.

Marlatt's civic involvement included appointments to the boards of the Webb C. Ball Company, Likly & Rockett Trunk Company, Jones Home for Friendless Children, Baker Raulang Company, and J. A. Wigmore Land Company. He 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.

Marlatt 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.

A biographical sketch in the CMA archives, written by his colleague, Edwin E. Miller, describes Marlatt 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 on February 21, 1873, to Herman L. Morgan (1832–1902) and Sarah H. Smith (1838–1936), Julia Katherine Morgan was one of three sisters. She attended Hathaway Brown School and on October 31, 1899, married William H. Marlatt. An article published in the *Cleveland Press* (August 18, 1939) shortly after Mrs. Marlatt's suicidal death on August 14 describes her as "a quiet, retiring person who disliked any suggestion of ostentation." The article continued: "Adverse to publicity, Mrs. Marlatt's name seldom was before the public. What charitable work she did was always in a quiet way. In former years Mrs. Marlatt was a member of both the Daughters of the American Revolution and The Women's City Club, but as far as can be learned was not active in either group."

Once again, Edwin Miller paid tribute to Mrs. Marlatt in an unpublished biographical sketch in the CMA archives: "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, William H. Marlatt, was a prominent lawyer, a canny investor and a good business man. Realizing that the position

which he occupied in the community exposed him to certain dangers to which his wife was not subject, he did 90% of his investing in his wife's name, with the result that when he died about three years prior to her death his estate was worth only one-tenth of his wife's estate."

The Marlatt bequest came to the museum as a surprise. In a letter in the CMA archives dated August 21, 1939, to Director William A. Milliken, who was traveling in Europe, Curator of Paintings Henry Sayles Francis wrote: "I'm sure you suffered brain fever when you got my cable of last Friday, much as we all did here. Trustees included. Aside from the letter, a copy of which I include with the will, we rummaged out of the file (1928); the only other 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 since he knew Mr. Marlatt in business, and to meet casually on Fairmount Boulevard. 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. We know nothing of the collection. Do you? The estate is published downtown as \$1,024,000."

In addition to the Kelmscott collection and other books, several paintings were given to the museum upon Mrs. Marlatt's death. Among these were 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.

By the time Mrs. Marlatt's estate was settled, the museum was the recipient of almost \$1 million. In 1943, the museum purchased the first painting with the Marlatt funds: Goya's portrait of *Don Juan Antonio Cuervo*. Other notable paintings in the museum's collection subsequently purchased with funds from the Marlatt bequest include such masterpieces as Frederic Edwin Church's *Twilight in the Wilderness*, Friedrich Amerling's *The Young Eastern Woman*, Peter Paul Rubens's *Portrait of Isabella Brant*, Henri Matisse's *Festival of Flowers, Nice*, Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres's *Antiochus and Stratonice*, Romare Bearden's *Wrapping It up at the Lafayette*, Charles Sheeler's *Church Street El*, Chen Hongshou's *Lady Xuanwen Jun Giving Instructions on the Classics, The Seventh Month from the "Odes of the Bin"* (China, Southern Song dynasty), *Monju and Attendants* (Japan, Kamakura period), and *Portrait of a Monk* (Korean, Joseon period).