

**Don B. Wilmeth\***

## **THE SIDNEY P. ALBERT-BERNARD SHAW COLLECTION**

In November 1991, Brown University announced the addition of the Sidney P. Albert-G. B. Shaw Collection to its Special Collections. The purchase of the private collection of Sidney P. Albert was accomplished with the support and encouragement of the then president of Brown, Vartan Gregorian. At the same time, and upon Albert's recommendation, Brown acquired the correspondence and other documents relating to Shaw's dealings with his American publisher, Dodd, Mead & Company (and, by extension, other publishers). An inaugural exhibit of material from the Albert Collection ("Quintessential Shaw") was mounted in Brown's John Hay Library, 5 May–28 July, 1995, curated by former Brown Curator for Printed Books, Jennifer Lee. To celebrate the opening of the exhibit and to mark the addition of the Albert-Shaw Collection to Brown's holdings, the Friends of Brown Library hosted a dinner-reception on 5 May with readings from Shaw plays and a brief talk ("100 Years Ago: G.B.S. in 1895") by Albert, followed by a public lecture ("Shaw's Utopia") delivered by Shaw biographer Michael Holroyd.

Sidney P. Albert, Professor Emeritus of Philosophy, California State University–Los Angeles, is a well-known Shaw authority, specializing in *Major Barbara*. His interest in *Major Barbara* naturally combines his lifelong interest in philosophy and the theatre, for in addition to a 1939 Ph.D. in Philosophy from Yale University, Albert also did postdoctoral study in drama and theatre at Carnegie Institute of Technology (now Carnegie–Mellon), Northwestern, Stanford, Columbia, and the University of Illinois. His focused interest in *Major Barbara* is reflected in numerous lectures and papers delivered on various aspects of the play and over a dozen published essays.

Albert's collecting of Shaviana, covering a period of over forty years, has been far more catholic in its scope than just material on *Major Barbara*. The Albert Collection includes more than two thousand books by and about Shaw,

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*\*I wish to thank Brown Special Collections Librarians Mark Brown and Jean Rainwater, and former Curator of Printed Books at Brown, Jennifer Lee, for guidance in the description of contents of the Albert Collection.*

among them a substantial group of pre-1900 publications, and works by critics, many of them inscribed. In addition, there are more than 220 volumes of a general nature on the theatre/drama of Shaw's time. The collection is exceptionally strong on ephemera: pamphlets, "rough proof" and rehearsal copies of plays, press clippings, film stills, posters, publicity photographs, recordings, photographs of Shaw's 1933 visit to Hollywood (from the Hearst Collection), and publications of Shaw societies in London, New York, Los Angeles, and Tokyo. Some seventy-nine items of original Shaw correspondence can be found in the holdings, as well as five letters from Shaw's longtime secretary, Blanche Patch, and one by secretary Georgina Musters, all six written on Shaw's behalf. Some sixteen additional letters of associative interest are in the holdings (including five letters from Charlotte Shaw). More than 222 periodicals containing pieces by (85) or about Shaw round out the collection. As a complement to the original material in the collection, Albert has added photocopies of Shaw material from various archives in the United States and England.

Although there is no one focus to the Albert Collection, a brief description of some of the special items might provide a sense of Albert's acquisitions:

The only known book (pamphlet) of Shaw's magazine piece, *The Great Fight* (reprinted by Mitchell Kennerly, June 1921).

*Is Free Trade Alive or Dead?:* a lecture by Shaw given at the Glasgow Fabian Society, 2 October 1903, and printed for private circulation by George Standring (London 1906).

Documents for the terms and conditions for public performance of various Shaw plays.

Shaw's memorandum of agreement with Penguin Books for the publication of *Major Barbara* (7 February 1944).

First publication of various plays (*Widowers' Houses*, *Why She Would Not: A Little Comedy*, *Shakes versus Shaw*, *Pygmalion*).

Costume designs for *Arms and the Man* with notations in Shaw's hand.

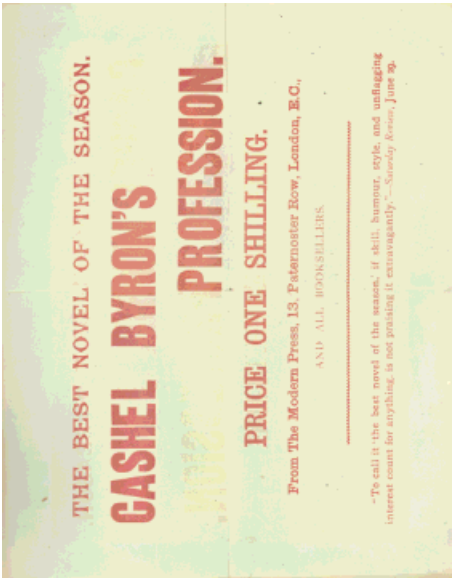
First American edition (unauthorized, n.d.) of Shaw's lecture "Modern Religion" (New Reform Club, London, 21 March 1912).

Limited edition (750 copies) of *Saint Joan* press book with colored plates of settings and costumes (by Charles Ricketts) for first British production.

*The Art Journal* (1891): large bound volume containing a rare surviving example of Shaw's art criticism (on "J. M. Strudwick").

*Statement of the Evidence in Chief. . . Before the Joint-Committee on Stage Plays* (July 1909). Scarce, privately printed edition.

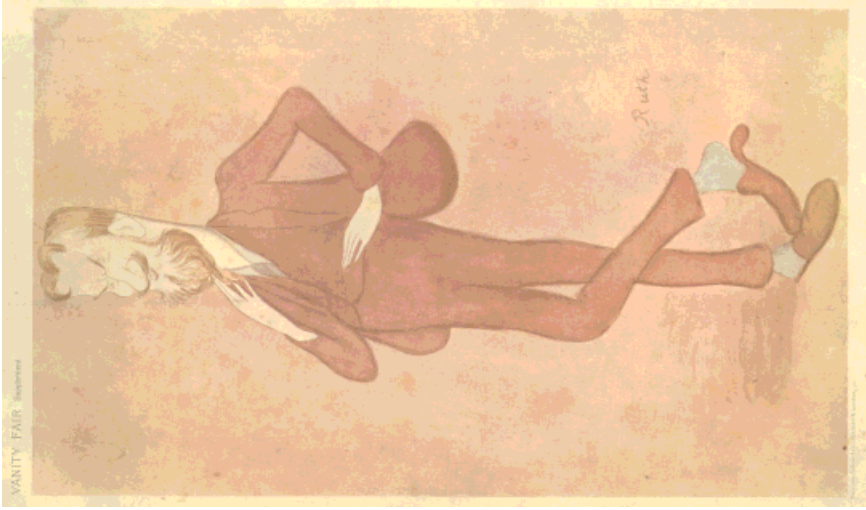
Rough proof (unpublished) copies of *Pygmalion*, *Androcles and the Lion*, *The Inca of Perusalem*, *O'Flaherty V.C.*, *Augustus Does His Bit*, *The Apple Cart*, *Too True to Be Good*, *On the Rocks*, *The Six of Calais*, *The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles*.



**Figure 1.**

The Modern Press, “The Best Novel of the Season. Cashel Byron’s Profession.” London: The Modern Press, [1886]. This broadside advertisement for the first appearance in print of a novel by George Bernard Shaw contains the following statement from the 29 June issue of *Saturday Review*: “To call it ‘the best novel of the season,’ if skill, humour, style, and unflagging interest count for anything is not praising it extravagantly.”

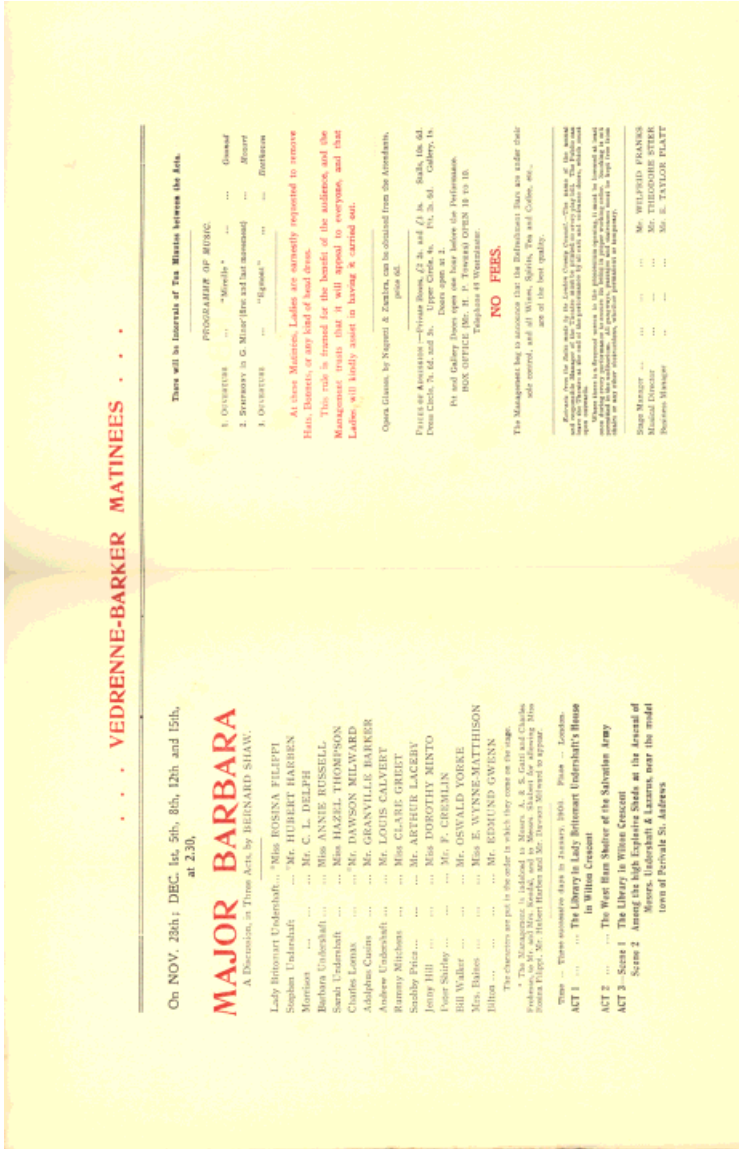
Sidney P. Albert-George Bernard Shaw Collection.



**Figure 2.**

*Vanity Fair*  
Bernard Shaw by  
“Ruth” (Max Beerbohm). Watford & London: Bemrose Dalziel Ltd., 28 December 1905.

Max Beerbohm made over sixty cartoons of Shaw. This one had the caption: “Magnetic, he has the power to infect almost everyone with the delight that he takes in himself.” Sidney P. Albert-George Bernard Shaw Collection.



**Figure 3.** Royal Court Theatre, “Vedrenne-Barker Matinees.” Program for the first production of *Major Barbara*, A *Discussion in Three Acts*, by Bernard Shaw [London: W. T. Haycock & Sons Ltd., 1905]. The first production of *Major Barbara* ran from 28 November through 15 December 1905. The cast included Annie Russell as Barbara Undershaft, her husband, Oswald Yorke, as Bill Walker, Rosina Filippi as Lady Britomart Undershaft, Louis Calvert as Andrew Undershaft, and Granville Barker as Adolphus Cousins. Sidney P. Albert-George Bernard Shaw Collection.

Rehearsal copies of *Geneva* and *Buoyant Billions*; actors' copies for *Androcles and the Lion* and *The Philanderer*.

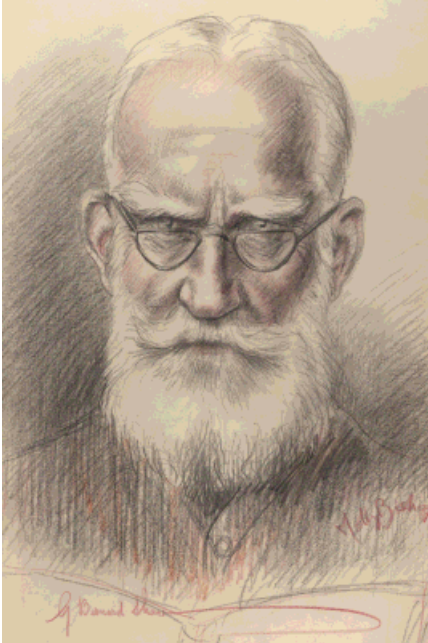
A large series of Fabian publications.

Theatre programs for the Court Theatre and other early Shaw productions, as well as a large collection of various *Major Barbara* programs.

The Dodd, Mead component of the Albert-Shaw Collection incorporates fifteen letters signed by Shaw (plus numerous postcards), original contracts, sketches and photographs of Shaw, and more than a hundred files covering contracts and reprint rights. Collectively, this unique holding provides a revealing picture of Shaw as a businessman who structured his own contracts and, as is well known, constantly championed the economic cause of writers. In all, there are over three hundred items in this archive. The Dodd, Mead holdings are organized under two series, Series I (to 1950) and Series II (after 1950). Likely of most interest are the items in Series I, covering the period of Shaw's personal relationship with Dodd, Mead. Subseries A includes letters from Shaw (1933–1949); subseries B gathers together graphic materials from Shaw, including several photographs (William Morris, Shaw, Edward Burne-Jones); subseries C contains contracts with Shaw (including one with Brentano's); subseries D comprises three items relating to Blanche Patch (on Shaw's behalf); subseries E includes a sizable number of letters, mostly from Shaw's publisher; and subseries F has items having to do with the publication of specific titles (i.e., *The Adventures of the Black Girl*, *The Apple Cart*, *Arms and the Man*, *Arms and the Man and Two Other Plays*, *Back to Methuselah*, *Buoyant Billions*, *Caesar and Cleopatra*, *Candida*, *The Devil's Disciple*, *The Doctor's Dilemma*, *Everybody's Political What's What?*, *Florence Farr*, *Bernard Shaw*, and *W. B. Yeats*, *The Future of Political Science in America*, *G.B.S. 90*, *Geneva*, *Geneva/Cymbeline Refinished/Good King Charles*, *Nine Plays*, *Pygmalion*, *Pygmalion/Major Barbara*, *The Real Bernard Shaw*, *Saint Joan*, *Sixteen Self Sketches*, *Three Masters of the English Drama*, *William Morris as I Knew Him*, *Works* [various editions, 1933–1949]).

Subseries G includes miscellaneous items identified by name (Dodd, Mead; F. E. Lowenstein, Society of Authors; Stern & Reubens; Theatre Guild; Walter Trumbull; U.S. Customs [about Penguin Books]). Subseries H is labeled Graphics (and likely includes some post-1950 items). This group of folders includes a charcoal drawing of Shaw, an ink drawing of Shaw by Constance Joan Naar, and several other drawings and engravings of the playwright. Subseries I holds various photographs used or considered for publication (including a group of shots of Shaw and Gabriel Pascal). Subseries J and K include files of miscellaneous printed materials, tearsheets, and clippings.

Series II (after 1950) comprises three subseries. A is "By title" (similar to F in Series I), including publications by various publishers (up to the late 1960s) of the following: *The Adventures of the Black Girl*, *Androcles and the Lion*, *Arms and the Man*, *Back to Methuselah*, *Bernard Shaw's Will*, *Buoyant Billions*,



**Figure 4.**

Molly Bishop, portrait of George Bernard Shaw, n.d. Colored crayon and pencil on paper. Signed “Molly Bishop” and further signed by the sitter, “Bernard Shaw.” Purchased for the Sidney P. Albert-George Bernard Shaw Collection.

**Figure 5.**

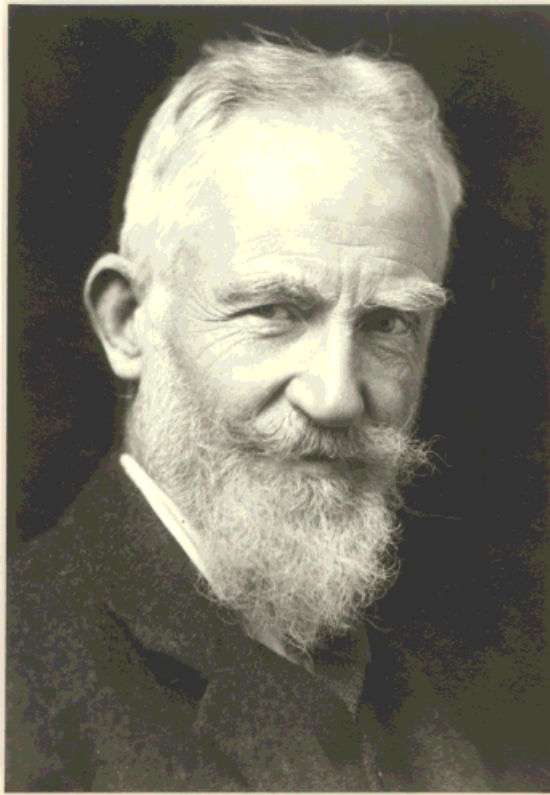
*(facing)*

George Bernard Shaw, photograph, 1919, with autograph note, signed, 17 June 1919. Sidney P. Albert-George Bernard Shaw Collection.



**Figure 6.**

MGM Studios, photograph taken in April 1933, at a Hollywood lunch given by Marion Davies. Seated to the left of Shaw is Charlie Chaplin, and to the right of Marion Davies is Louis B. Mayer. Clark Gable was also present. Sidney P. Albert-George Bernard Shaw Collection.



AYOT ST LAWRENCE, WELWYN, HERTS.  
STATION: WHEATHAMPSTEAD, G.N.R. 2 1/4 MILES.  
TELEGRAMS: BERNARD SHAW, CODICOTE.

17<sup>th</sup> June 1919

I shall be at 10 Adelphi Terrace  
on Thursday morning at 11, and glad  
to see you, but this isn't the prospect  
of a chance of my going west (in  
your sense) just now.

G. W. S.

## *Theatre Survey*

*Caesar and Cleopatra/Saint Joan/Pygmalion, Candida, Collected Letters* (various editions, 1957–1982), *Complete Plays with Prefaces, Don Juan in Hell, Lesser Known Plays, London Music, Major Barbara, Major Plays of Shaw, Man and Superman, Plays Pleasant and Unpleasant, Pygmalion, Caesar and Cleopatra, Pygmalion and Other Plays, Saint Joan, Saint Joan/Major Barbara/Androcles, Selected Plays, Selected Prose, Seven Plays, Shaw's Music, The Shorter Plays, Ten Short Plays, The Theatre of Bernard Shaw, Treasury of Bernard Shaw, An Unfinished Novel*). The final two subseries (B and C) include various documents relating to press reports, sales figures, invoices, contracts, and tearsheets and clippings.

Combined, the Albert-Shaw materials and the Dodd, Mead archive form a unique and important collection devoted to Bernard Shaw. They likewise complement Brown's sizable collection of play texts, in particular the Harris Collection of American Poetry and Drama.

The magnitude of the collection, including anticipated additions, has made cataloging a slow proposition, although it is under way. Special Collections has available a general finding guide to the holdings, along with a detailed breakdown of the categories established by Albert in formulating a descriptor of the holdings. A similar list is available for the Dodd, Mead holdings. In order to gain access to the Albert-Shaw Collection or to obtain additional information, potential users should contact Jean Rainwater, Special Collections, Box A, Brown University, Providence, RI 02912.

A tour of an exhibit drawn from the Albert-Shaw Collection can be found on the web at [http://www.brown.edu/Facilities/University\\_Library/exhibits/shaw/](http://www.brown.edu/Facilities/University_Library/exhibits/shaw/).