

**Emily Dickinson International Society
Minutes for Annual Members' Meeting
Amherst College Alumni House
Saturday, August 12, 2017
9:30 a.m.**

The meeting was called to order at 9:38 a.m. Fifty-four members were present.

President's Welcome and Report

EDIS President Martha Nell Smith welcomed the members and asked if everyone was "Rowing in Eden" and "Dwelling in Possibility." She stated that we needed to get through a lot of issues relatively quickly.

Approval of the Minutes of the June 26, 2016, Members' Meeting at the Paris, France, EDIS International Conference

Smith asked Nancy List Pridgen, Secretary of EDIS, to request approval of the minutes for the June 26, 2016, Member Meeting. Pridgen asked for any amendments and corrections, and since there were none, Jonnie Guerra moved to approve the minutes, and another member seconded the motion. All voiced their approval.

Treasurer's Report

Smith called on James Fraser, EDIS Treasurer, to present the treasurer's report. He stated that on July 1, 2016, the balance was \$33,116.33 and on June 30, 2017, the balance was \$21,727.67. EDIS paid off the University of Paris \$14,500 for last year's conference, which was completely covered by money we collected from the people who attended. Most of EDIS's income comes from registrations and memberships. EDIS spent \$5,000 for the publication of two *EDIS Bulletins*, \$10,000 in awards, and \$3,000 in gifts to the Emily Dickinson Museum and the Jones Library. J. Fraser said that anyone with questions could ask him later in the day.

Smith thanked Pridgen and Fraser for their reports.

Membership Committee Report

Smith next asked for Elizabeth Petrino, Chair of the Membership Committee, to present her report. Petrino thanked outgoing members Alexandra Socarides, Kate Dunning, and Cindy McKenzie for their service. She welcomed new members Pridgen, Sara Brock, and Midori Asahina onto the committee. Petrino also thanked Eleanor Heginbotham, who has agreed to stay on the committee.

Pridgen will provide new member packets for new EDIS members. Packets will include a certificate of membership, done in calligraphy, a letter from the president of EDIS, a Dickinson crossword puzzle, and a magnet.

Brock will work with public high school teachers. Brock has advertised EDIS on the message board for the National Counsel of Teachers. She has also contacted Bruce Penniman, who manages the website for the New England Association of Teachers of English, and asked for advertisement of EDIS information. EDIS plans to have a day dedicated to teachers at an annual meeting. Sessions will deal with such issues as how to pair Dickinson poems regularly taught in high school with other frequently-taught literary works.

Asahina will be the liaison for international members of EDIS. She is Vice President of the Emily Dickinson Society of Japan. This society publishes a journal entitled *The Emily Dickinson Review*. It carried a detailed report of the EDIS International Conference in Paris in 2016.

Petrino reported that membership in EDIS has been creeping up steadily. This year the Society has 294 total active subscribers, up from 280 in 2016. These include 23 associate members; 65 EDIS/Dickinson Museum members, up from 55 last year; eight institutional members; 162 regular members; 27 student members; two sustaining members; and several contributing members. Scholars who have an article published in the *Emily Dickinson Journal* receive a one-year gratis membership.

The committee continues to advertise the Dickinson Society on listservs, at conferences, and at other Dickinson events. To advertise EDIS, the Society may put out a new takeaway item, such as a facsimile of one of the poems written on scraps of paper, in Dickinson's handwriting.

2019 International Conference at Asilomar, California

Smith announced that the 2018 EDIS Annual Meeting would again be in Amherst, with poetry groups, including at least one especially aimed at teachers, and a Critical Institute.

Then Smith introduced Vice-President Barbara Mossberg to talk about the 2019 International Conference, which will be in Asilomar, California, a state park right on the dunes of the Monterrey Peninsula, for conferences. Mossberg said the purpose of this location is to draw more members and potential members from the western United States, the West Coast, and Asia. The theme of the conference will be "I Visited the Sea." Dates will be August 8-10, 2019. It will provide an opportunity to explore Dickinson's work that focuses on the environment. Activities will include a beach party, a barbecue on the coast, and a parade of people in white dresses leading dogs to visit the sea, as in the Dickinson poem. It will bring together waves, sand, and summer. The price of a room includes all meals, but attendees have the

option of staying elsewhere and paying separately for meals. Asilomar also accommodates families and includes pool tables and a pool. Members can fly into San Jose or San Francisco and take a shuttle to Pecan Grove, home of Asilomar.

Asilomar was designed between 1900 and 1913, by Julia Morgan, the first woman engineer to graduate from Berkeley. These were early years in the discovery of Dickinson's poetry. Mossberg is Pecan Grove's official Poet in Residence. Pecan Grove is the butterfly capital of the world, with Monarchs overwintering there.

Possibilities for Future Annual Meetings and International Conferences

Páraic Finnerty talked briefly about sponsoring an annual meeting on Dickinson and Shakespeare in 2020. This meeting may be held near the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, DC.

Emily Dickinson Museum Update

Emily Dickinson Museum Director Jane Wald discussed programs and improvements taking place at the Museum. Wald began her report by reading the new mission statement of the Emily Dickinson Museum: "To spark the imagination by amplifying Emily Dickinson's revolutionary poetic voice from the place she called home." This new mission will produce a new creative approach to programming and orientation at the Homestead.

Wald introduced her program team – Brooke Steinhauser and Elizabeth Bradley. This was Steinhauser's first year at directing the Humanities-funded teacher workshops, a major accomplishment. The National Endowment provided \$170,000 to instruct seventy-six teachers from New England and the entire country. Wald stated that EDIS and the Museum would continue to communicate and work together on this extremely successful program.

Steinhauser and the staff are working to revise and expand the artistic programs at the Homestead, including a monthly community poetry event with readings by poets, and the annual poetry festival, which will be held September 14th to 16th. A new documentary on Dickinson, produced by Terence Davies in conjunction with his film *A Quiet Passion*, will be shown.

Restoration projects include continuing to work with the University of Massachusetts archeological services, focusing now on locating the footprint of the property. The foundations of the barn have been pinned down. The barn was quite close to the house. The garden beds are being analyzed, with the additional help of the University of Pennsylvania program in archeo-botany. Seeds are being collected, culled, and identified. The orchard has already been restored with the same kinds of fruit trees that had grown there. Additionally, other fruit trees have been restored on the property.

The conservatory has been reconstructed, incorporating the original 19th Century double-paned conservatory windows, which had been used in the garage when the conservatory had been taken down in 1916-18. A doorway into the dining has been restored. Construction revealed amazing old wallpaper.

A fire suppression system has been installed in the Evergreens. Again, construction revealed wallpaper of an earlier period. Costs of reconstruction of the conservatory totaled \$300,000, and costs of putting in the fire suppression system added up to \$400,000. The Museum was awarded a grant from the Community Preservation Act, which was matched by Amherst College. Amherst College also matched other money raised for such expenses as wiring and roofing. Heating, ventilation, and cooling systems for each building remain, and they will cost \$1,000,000.

The Museum will soon restore the path between the houses, which Emily Dickinson described as “just wide enough for two who love,” according to her niece Martha Bianchi. Marta McDowell is going to present a series of garden programs throughout the year.

An intern from the Institute for Curatorial Practices has almost completed a 360 degree exhibit of Emily Dickinson’s bedroom. It has portals in various locations where the viewer can dig into objects, such as poems and letters. Also, visitors can still pay to spend one or two hours in Dickinson’s bedroom to write or create.

Nominations Committee Report

Committee Chair Páraic Finnerty reported on elections and results of the Nominations Committee. Members of the committee are Faith Barrett, Paul Crumbley, J. Fraser, Michelle Kohler, and Alexandra Socarides.

Finnerty reported that only 36 votes were cast for the member-at-large election. Stephanie Farrar is the new Member-at-Large. Finnerty asked for members to share problems they had in the voting process. Some members said their mail program had automatically sent their EDIS mail to junk mail.

Finnerty reported that Vivian Pollak was going to step down from the board, and that Marta Werner was chosen to take her place. Board members reelected Barbara Mossberg, Martha Nell Smith, and Elizabeth Petrino to the board. They also reelected the slate of officers of the board. Martha Nell Smith, president; Barbara Mossberg, vice president; James Fraser, treasurer; Nancy List Pridgen, Secretary; Diana Fraser, clerk; Elizabeth Petrino, membership chair; and Páraic Finnerty, nominations chair.

Finnerty reminded the members that EDIS would have another member-at-large election. He asked members to nominate themselves or another member to run. He also asked them to watch for information from Johns Hopkins University about

voting and to check their spam mail in case emails got lost there. A member suggested that providing a picture of each nominee with information about each would be helpful. Another member expressed frustration about voting online through Johns Hopkins. Someone else suggested communicating through Facebook or Instagram. In response to a question, Finnerty said the ballots come through Johns Hopkins and not directly through him. Information will appear on the EDIS website. Finnerty also plans to have information in the *Emily Dickinson Bulletin*. Members need to vote by March 2018.

Members' Talk Back and Announcements

Mossberg presided over the session of members' comments and questions. She encouraged members to vote. Le Sing from Taiwan said she would like to sponsor an Emily Dickinson conference in Taiwan this year, probably in November 2018, focusing on volcanic islands or global Dickinson. She said the topic would be as broad as possible and that everyone would be cordially invited. She asked for anyone who had thoughts or ideas to share them with her.

Richard Brantley shared his experience in New Haven in June hearing the work of a composer, Martin Bresnick, professor at Yale. His oratorio was entitled "Passions of Bloom," patterned after Bach's "St. Matthew's" and "St. John's Passion," and featuring Harold Bloom as the evangelist and the voices instead of Jesus Christ and others, were Whitman, Melville, and Emily Dickinson. He said the concept seemed at first to be absurd but that many of the settings of Dickinson were as moving of any he had ever heard. Someone suggested it might be on You Tube.

Jane Eberwein spoke highly of the Dickinson presentation at the Morgan Library and stated that the catalogue for that exhibit is available as a free download on the Amherst College Press.

A member recited the Dickinson poem, "These strangers in a foreign world." Another member in response to this poem thanked EDIS for showing him that there is still sanity in the world by providing a congenial group of people discussing Emily Dickinson's poetry while people from his hometown, Charlottesville, were texting him of unbelievable horrors happening there that day.

Eleanor Heginbotham suggested that anyone who will be near the Washington area attend the annual Dickinson birthday party at the Folger Library on the Monday closest to the 10th of December. Heginbotham also spoke eloquently about the EDIS Dickinson research group, which had met that morning. She asserted that it should be longer and at more congenial time so that all present at EDIS weekends could attend and hear of the many research projects and other Dickinson inspired work that are taking place now. Someone else suggested that it be renamed "Dickinson Research Projects and Passions" because of all the artistic projects that are presented in addition to the research projects.

Adjournment

Mossberg listed the speakers and events that would be taking place for the rest of the day, including a barbecue picnic on the homestead lawn and the concert by Red Skies. The meeting was adjourned at 10:41 a.m.