

2011-08-21

Meeting in a Chess Collector's Paradise

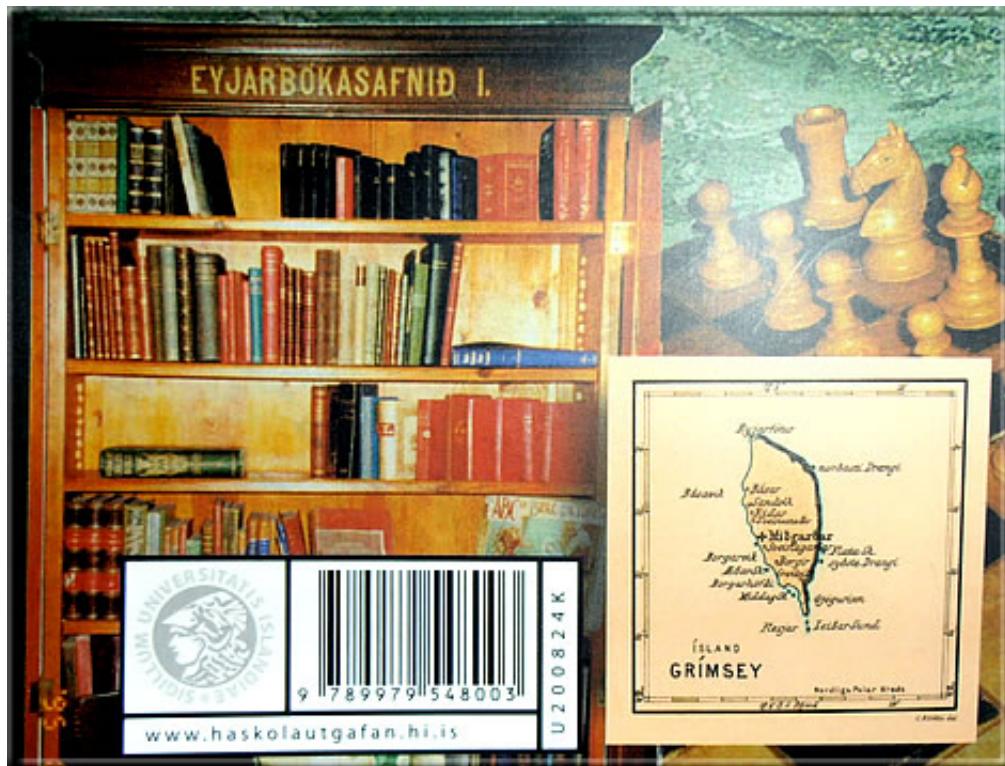
Pictorial report on the Cleveland meeting 2011

KWA General Meeting at Cleveland, Ohio 19-21 August, 2011

Before Andy Ansel goes into the events at Cleveland, Michael Negele reports on his Fiske research and adds some photos from his stopover in Iceland (outward flight) and from the visit to the Niagara Falls / Toronto subsequent to the Cleveland meeting:

Those who remember my contribution THE KING OF COLLECTORS AND HIS PEERS in *KARL* 4/2004 know that I had already dealt there with Daniel Willard Fiske.

Meanwhile I have succeeded to acquire a number of works published by his literary executor Horatio S. White and to immerse myself deeper in this exciting life. You may assign many titles to Fiske: "Book collector, librarian, linguistic genius, writer, chess player, chess organizer, chess author, journalist, university professor, unsettled traveler, disputatious citizen".



Kristín Bragadóttir:

Willard Fiske - vinur Íslands og velgjörðamaður (Cover verso)

In the a.m. KARL I wrote (the original quotation is given on our corresponding [German page](#)):

Prof. Daniel Willard Fiske (*11/11/1831, †17/09/1904 in Frankfurt on the Main), a man of unusual energy whose life should be outlined briefly.

Due to his enthusiasm for Nordic legends, Fiske had studied at Copenhagen and Uppsala in his very young days and returned to New York in 1852. He was a real chess enthusiast; so he edited together with Paul Morphy and later on also with Sam Loyd the "Chess Monthly" from 1857 to 1860. Arguably it was Fiske's merit as well that the "First American Chess Congress New York 1857" came a reality, the tournament book written by him is a bibliophile tidbit. Later on Fiske's interest in chess waned considerably, he travelled a lot through Europe and allegedly disbanded his (first) extensive collection of chess literature. (Von der Lasa reported on that in DSZ, April 1864, p.99.)

From 1868 to 1883 he was a lecturer for Nordic languages at the newly founded Cornell University at Ithaca, N.Y., and at the same time he was recorded as their first librarian. In July 1880 Fiske married the tuberculous millionaire heiress Jennie McGraw who died barely two years later after travelling together to Italy. Caused by a seemingly only formal obstacle in the university statutes, there developed a long lasting acrimonious legal dispute between the widower and the Cornell University about the considerable part of her inheritance (about one million US\$) that Mrs McGraw-Fiske had donated to the university.

This for the American dispensation of justice important "last will case" was even brought to the Supreme Court of the USA, finally in 1890 Fiske got his rights. Obviously Fiske hadn't been able at that time to agree with two trustees of the university about certain terms of use regarding the library building which had to be newly set up. The positions had rapidly hardened as in the legacy case Fiske felt inadequately informed (and deceived) by the executors and trustees, subsequently he insisted on a passage in the inheritance law of the New York State which prohibited that more than 50% of a heritage could devolve on charitable objectives.

In conflict with the Cornell University, already in 1883 the excellent Dante expert Fiske had gone to Italy near Florence to pursue his research there. Again he built up a large chess library which he later donated to the Icelandic national library (Landsbokasafn) at Reykjavík. 1901-02 he published a chess magazine in Icelandic (I Uppnami = En prise), 1905 his work "Chess in Iceland" was posthumously published. But

Fiske bequeathed the Cornell University his great Dante collection (7000 volumes) together with his remaining library (10000 titles on Iceland, 1200 volumes of Rhaeto-Romanic literature, more than 3500 volumes on Petrarca) as well as a considerable estate (about 500 000 US\$); apparently Fiske's grudge had passed after more than 20 years.



My companion Bob van de Velde at the Icelandic airport Keflavík.

This time I got myself in the right mood, so to speak, with a short visit to Iceland (Unfortunately there was no time to make a detour to Reykjavík which is about 50 km away from the airport Keflavík.) in order to immerse myself particularly in the mystery of the so-called Rou(x) manuscript afterwards at the Cleveland Public Library. For a "Hunter of the lost books" this manuscript – allegedly written in 1734 – would of course be a special tidbit, but maybe Fiske has actually "invented" it as the Messrs. Eugene B. Cook, John G. White and John Keeble persistently affirmed. You can learn more about that from my presentation, and in the CPL you will find the reasoning (from 1925) elaborated handwritten by John Keeble why such a manuscript couldn't have existed. J.G. White's letter to Keeble (dated March 1926) is linked in the following:

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John G. White
A. J. Cannon
L. G. Spieth
H. A. Beckett
Jay P. Taggart
P. C. Freeman
W. H. Knott
Herbert A. Spring
H. C. Ulrich
Chas. F. Ross
Harold K. Bell
Paul H. Keough
Clare L. Russell
Rudolf J. Cannon
Herbert J. Duffy
J. E. Spitzer

White Cannon & Spieth
Counsellors at Law
1565 Union Trust Building
Cleveland

Telephone
Main 8340

March 27, 1926.

Mr. John Keeble,
87 Rosary Road,
Norwich, England.

Dear Sir:

I fear you must think me very remiss in answering your letter of January 7th. The fact is I have been very busy professionally and personal letters have been neglected. Not receiving immediate attention they got shoved under other papers and so overlooked until now, when I am clearing up my desk and found your letter.

I am surprised at your telling me that Mr. Murray still believes in the Rau Manuscript. Fiske dearly loved such mystifications in his younger days, and when his memory of this particular one was revived by my correspondence with him the zest returned -hence his correspondence with Notes & Queries and his later elaborate attempts to bolster up the story. How he came to father it on the particular person that he did I do not know, and cannot guess, but I presume his reading advised him of the existence of the person and he knew it would be impossible to dispute his statement. I think in former letters I have told you of some of his more elaborate boxes.

I was very well acquainted, indeed, with Mr. Richard Bacon, who as a young man roomed in Professor Fiske's house and was on very friendly terms with him. He often described to me the great pleasure that Fiske took in hoaxing people. In later years Mr. Fiske invited Dick and his wife to visit him in Florence and at that time I became acquainted with Mr. Fiske by correspondence and chaffed him on the subject of the Rau Manuscript. Of course, he denied that it was a hoax, but that did not change my opinion. Mr. Eugene B. Cook, who investigated the matter at the same time that I did was

Mr. H. R. Murray, author of the History of Chess

John G. White
A. J. Cannon
L. C. Spieth
H. A. Brubell
Jay F. Taggart
C. R. Freeman
W. H. Durst
Herbert A. Spring
H. C. Hecks
Chas. F. Ross
Harold K. Bell
Paul H. Keough
Clare D. Russell
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March 27, 1926.

Mr. John Keeble, #2.

of the same opinion that I was. He made considerable local inquiry in New York. X

You interest me with what you write about the traditional stage setting of the "Two Gentlemen of Verona". It is perhaps true that the language of the "Tempest" would fit any game but it certainly implies that Ferdinand and Miranda were playing some game, and I think that it was traditional stage setting, and that it was chess is sufficient to prove that that was what Shakespeare meant.

Thank you for the British Chess Problem Society Folder. I wish you would enter me as a subscriber, if such a thing is possible, and see that I get the numbers regularly, starting back with the first one, as I parted with what you sent me.

Yours respt'y,

John G. White

John G. White.

Shakespeare - his audience of Verona -
In the Stratford on Avon performance one
Scene opens with 2 gentlemen seated at
a table playing chess. but nothing is said
about it. Tradition says it has been so at
Stratford on Avon, right away from Shakespeare's time.
JK

JGW:CA

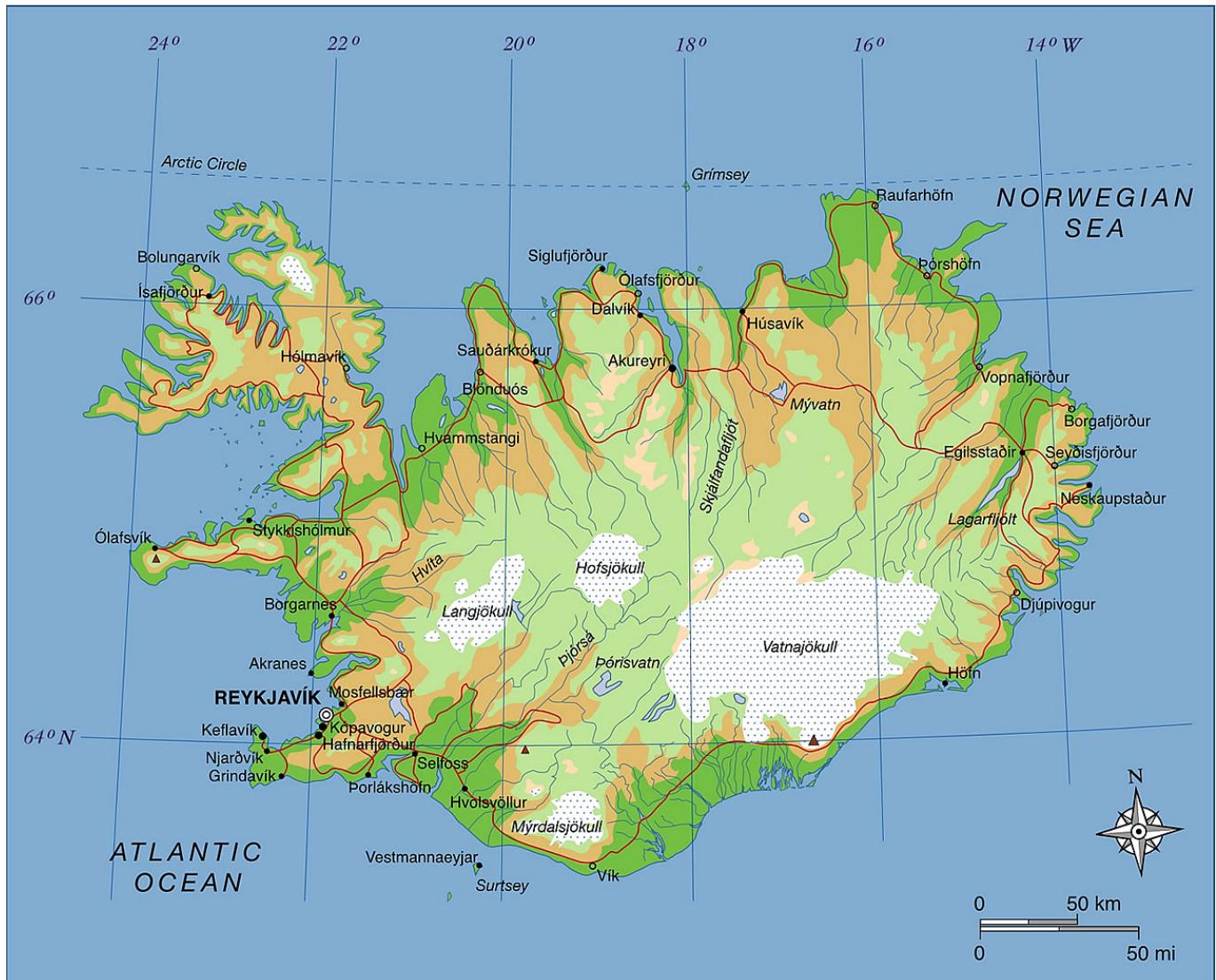
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Michael Negele's presentation at our general meeting: Daniel Willard Fiske - An American Pioneer of Chess Book Collecting (PDF, in the member section; 5.5 MB)

But not only about Daniel Willard Fiske, also about Emanuel Lasker as well as about another "lost book" I found new, up to now undiscovered material in this treasure trove for each chess researcher.



[Michael Negele](#) between Icelandic lumps of rock.



Card of Iceland

From Cleveland I went via Toronto to Niagara Falls, whereby my childhood dream could come true. Next afternoon I met our member Ken MacDonald in the Canadian metropolis on Lake Ontario – what more could I expect?

Michael Negele



Three KWA

members who managed to reach the Niagara Falls some days prior to me.



View from the

Sheraton Hotel, the Niagara Falls in the background.



The American part of the Niagara Falls.



The "Horseshoe Falls" on the Canadian side.



Overall view of the two falls separated by Goat Island.



Michael Negele in the typical togs on one of the "Maid of the Mist" boats, quite wet and quite near the Horseshoe Falls.

There is more to learn about the Niagara Falls at [Wikipedia](#) (for instance).



In Toronto: Ken MacDonald in front of the St. James Cathedral.



The neo-Gothic St. James Cathedral



Old and modern architecture meet here.



The CN Tower (Canadian National Tower) is a television tower with 553 metres in height.



The Allen Lambert Galleria -

sometimes called the "crystal cathedral of commerce".

*Below our deputy chairman **Andy Ansel** gives his personal depiction of the Cleveland meeting. But beforehand we would point to the greeting of our chairman **Guy Van Habberney** to the members which you will find in our member section – please read the Cleveland Intro (PDF).*



Andy Ansel radiates joy.

Friday afternoon August 19th I showed up at the Special Collections room of the Cleveland Public Library. I found many old chess friends frantically doing chess research before the official start of the KWA Annual meeting. Lunch? Are you kidding – everyone was engrossed in books, papers, magazines. At around 3:30 I was able to head people into the room that Kelly Ross had prepared for our meeting. The room had several large tables as well as about 15-20 chairs. Also on the side were bottles of water as well as some snacks. Let the KWA 2011 meeting in Cleveland begin.

Our members are "absorbed" by their work -

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John Donaldson



Jurgen Stigter



Per Skjoldager



Kelly Ross at her workplace



The (still) empty meeting room

The room had about 13 KWA members but we were joined by many Cleveland chess regulars as Friday's meeting was about chess in Cleveland with three different perspectives. To start off, David Presser, a local master who has been active in Cleveland chess since the 1960's regaled us with stories of the chess personalities and the chess scene in Cleveland. With many interesting and quite amusing tales we were all entertained. He also had a small handout which had some games and other jottings from this very personal look at local chess.



Andy introduces David Presser (on the right). On the left Robert Coffman and our hosts Pamela Eyerdam and Kelly Ross.



He was followed by KWA member Lary Rust, a long time Cleveland chess player and retailer who told us about the local chess club scene and the people who ran them. While I can't speak for everyone, I was amazed at how little I knew about the working of chess in Cleveland.



From left : Bob van de Velde, Andreas Saremba, Jurgen Stigter, Per Skjoldager, Calle Erlandsson, Michael Utt ...

Finally John Donaldson shared with us one of Cleveland's contributions to US chess history, the 2nd US Junior Championship 1947. He even had a nice booklet produced for the guests on this important chess event. Not only telling up about where the games were played, the conditions, and the personality of the players, John was able to get some amazing photos of the event. The winner was of course a local player, Larry Friedman, who is virtually unknown among chess players, in fact none of his games are in ChessBase Mega Database 2011.



John Donaldson with his

lecture

Second US Junior Championship – Cleveland 1947



Edited by John Donaldson with help from Andy Ansel and Kelly Ross.

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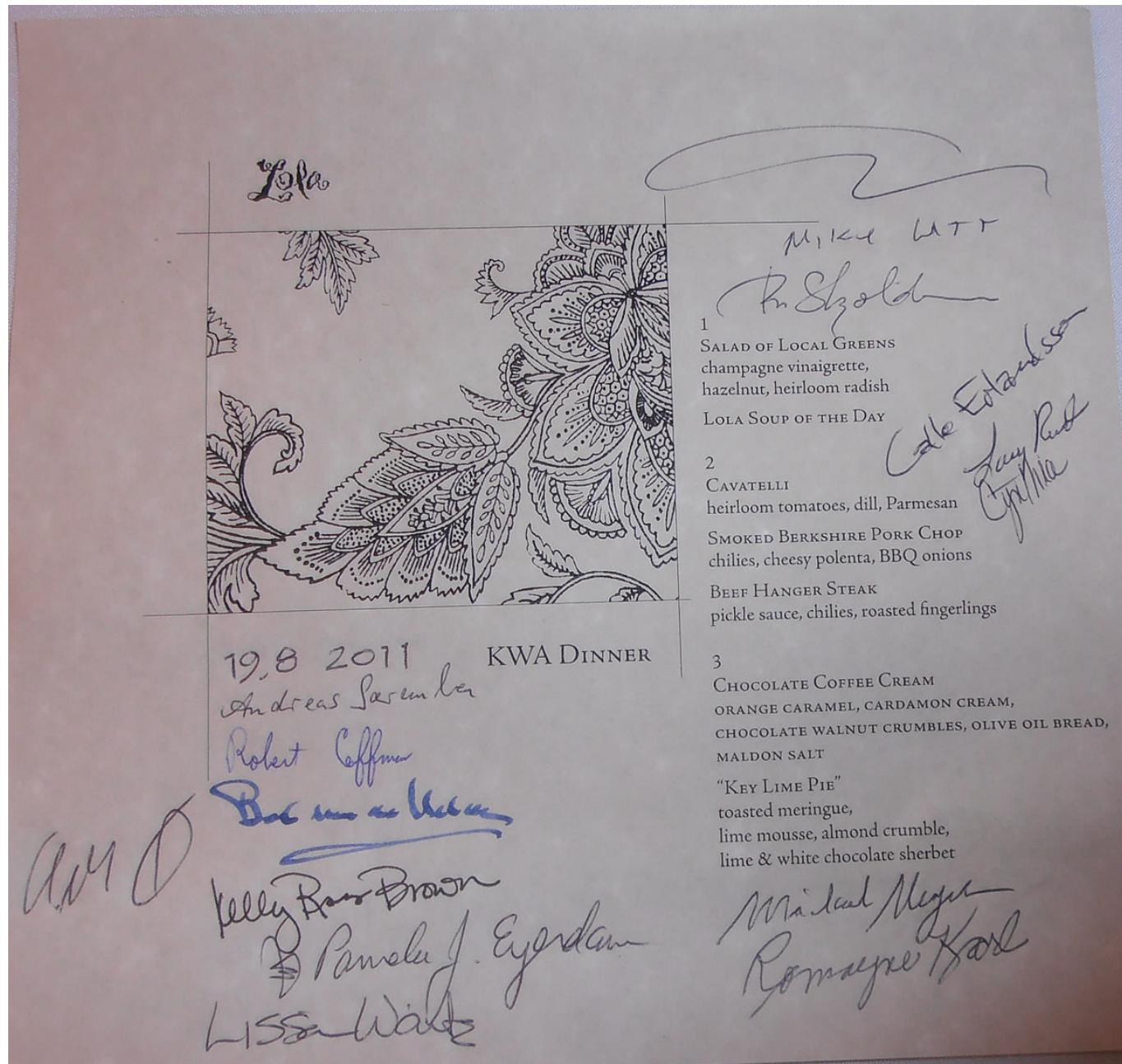
booklet for the attendees.

John Donaldson's



Andy looks completely happy, next to him two "Men in Black": Michael Utt (new US member) and Myron Samsin.

After three plus exhausting hours of chess, where better to go than to one of Cleveland's finest restaurants, Lola, where we all could relax and talk among ourselves in a private dining room. Not only did almost all members join us but we were fortunate to have three people from the Special Collections room join us (actually one ex-person). The meal and company were great and we all headed back to our rooms late that night.



The menu card from the "Lola" signed by the attendees.



At "Lola": Michael Negele, Lissa Waite and Pamela Eyerdam.

The next morning we were all part of the queue as the library opened at 10 AM. Again we had around 13-15 members and the first part we covered was the annual meeting. The meeting room was refreshed with plenty of nice breakfast snacks. There was some lively debate but important issues were decided such as

1. That we should create a Junior Membership for any person under the age of 25 would be free as we need to encourage young members to join and participate in our chess culture.
2. The board can decide to offer some free memberships to people who will contribute to our group's success but have some financial hardships.
3. When we redesign the web site we should allow for the introduction of member profiles to make it easier for existing (and new) members to contact others with similar interests.
4. There was some lively debate on the infamous Bibliography project and how we should resurrect it. It is unclear what scope this should take as different members have different ideas on the scope of details of such a project. We are going to form a committee to look at our options and see how we can finally proceed on this very important topic. We are looking for people with computer expertise and time to join in this effort. The first two members to volunteer are Per Skjoldager and Andreas Saremba.
5. There was some discussion of using social media to try and increase KWA's exposure.
6. It was agreed that there will not be another annual meeting in the US until at least 2014 and if so St. Louis should be heavily considered.
7. Finally it was agreed on the proposal to name Roger Klittich an "Honorary Member of the Board".

All topics of the general meeting are listed in this pdf file: Topics member assembly (in the member section!).



Concentrated listeners:
Maurice Carter, Myron Samsin and Robert Coffman.

So running behind, Michael Negele gave us a talk on Daniel Willard Fiske and the lost chess manuscript of Louis Rou(x). This lecture was filled with many pictures and stories on this very important American chess figure that is not well known by most of us. (See first page of this report.)

We then had a brief break for lunch though many stayed in the library to sneak in some last research.



[Per Skjoldager](#) with the preprint of his new book.

After lunch we had a very nice talk from Per on Nimzovich and the meaning of Hypermodern. Per's new book on Nimzo's early life is due to be published by McFarland early next year. There was some lively debate and interesting discussion on the subject.

Next Bob van de Velde talked about Lasker and bridge. Again the things one learn from such a learned expert is quite amazing. This talk was very interesting as he greatly expanded upon from the great Laker book project in which he contributed a chapter.



Our bridge expert Bob van de Velde

Finally Martin Frère Hillyer (our newest member) joined up. As many may know, Hillyer wrote about his relative Thomas Frère and at the 2007 meeting in NYC showed us some amazing pictures and other little known memorabilia about early chess in the US.



Our new member Martin F. Hillyer gives a lecture.

Now he explained to us about this latest amazing family find - a chess board - his relatives made. That

board Paul Morphy used to play on in the 1st American Chess Congress 1857 and also during the World Championship 1886. Furthermore the pieces he has set up on the board were the actual pieces used at the 6th American Congress. Quite an amazing historical find!



Martin Hillyer's

Morphy chess board



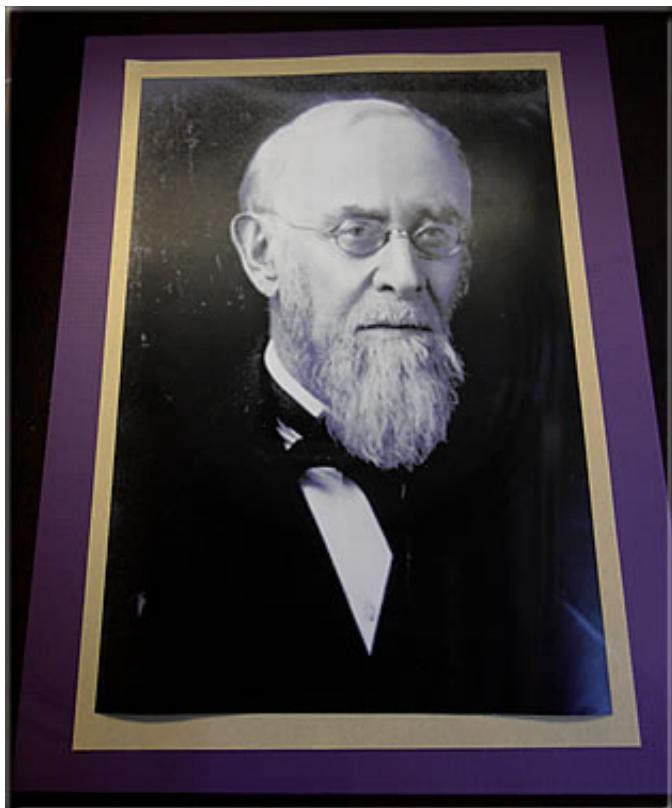
From left: Kelly

Ross, Calle Erlandsson, Jurgen Stigter, Robert Coffman and Andreas Sarembo.

The last speaker for Saturday's meeting was John G White's Special Collections Librarian, Kelly Ross. Kelly (who along with the rest of the staff) did an amazing job both before and after the meeting in getting research material and other artifacts available for a large number of members who spent extra time at the library. Here she pulled out some special JGW artifacts and arranged them on a table and was able to explain not only their origin but their importance to White. Also we were told quite a bit about JGW the man, as well as the history of his collection. This talk left us all not only inspired but feeling a little inadequate about our own collections.



The table with the John G. White artifacts



John Griswold White



A table with memorabilia of the American problemist Edgar Holladay.



Michael Negele

presents a gift: *Scacchia Ludus* volume 1.



Kelly Ross,

Pamela Eyerdam, Andreas Saremba and Per Skjoldager

So you think that would be it? Not at all, after a very short break we all adjourned to a local Spanish Tapas restaurant Mallorca and hung out and talked about ...chess. Finally around 9:30 or so this weary writer returned to his hotel room, totally drained from a very intellectual day devoted to chess.



Mallorca restaurant

Our group in the



"Shake hands"

with Marty Hillyer (and with a little "transposed letters" in Jurgen's T-shirt print... **Chess is not Sport, Art, or Science... CHESS IS WAR!**)



Our Canadian researcher of the origins of chess: Myron Samsin - finally properly captured on film!

A number of additional pictures from Friday and Saturday are gathered in the two following galleries: [Cleveland Meeting I](#) (26 photos) and [Cleveland Meeting II](#) (23 photos).



Michael Utt (left) with Lary Rust

So early morning we had arranged transportation to Lary Rust's chess shop where he agreed to host the book exchange as the Library was closed. Lary's shop may be unique in the US as it is situated in a large shopping mall. Lary gave a brief talk on how he decided to locate his shop in a mall and how he operates it. Also both Maurice Carter and Lary Rust had some very nice gifts for us. Then the meeting deteriorated as everyone started combing Lary's extensive books looking for wants. I am still not sure if Jurgen Stigter has left Lary's shop till now!



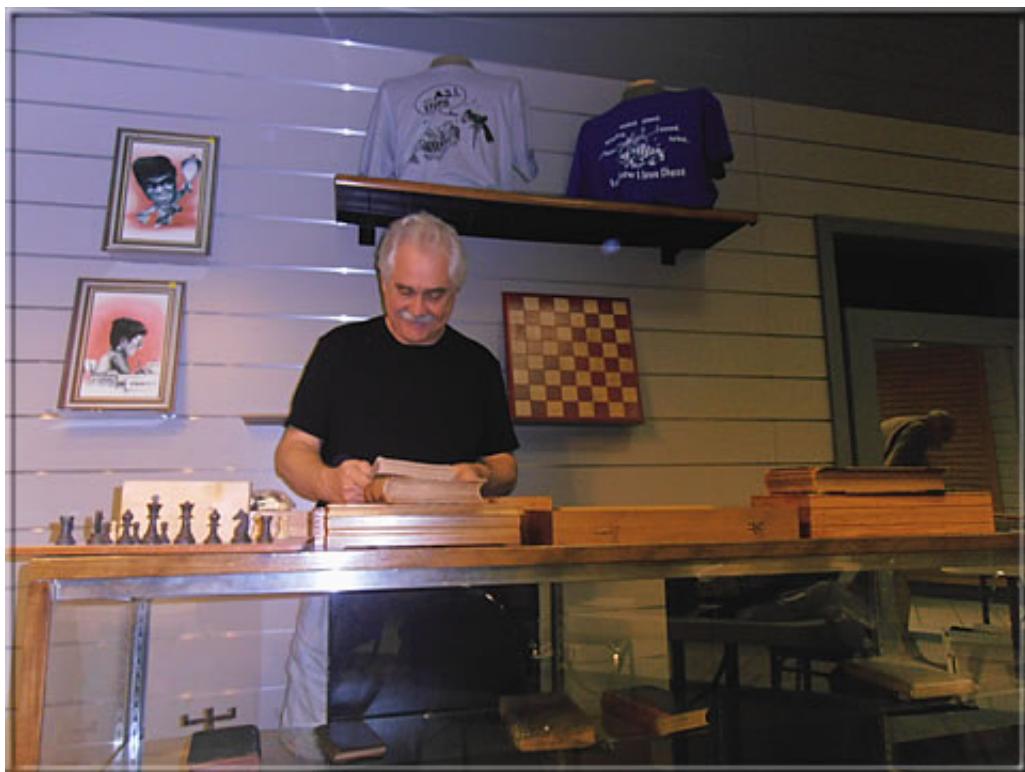
KWA book

market at Lary Rust



In Lary Rust's

chess shop



[Michael Utt](#)



[Maurice Carter](#) browsing through the shelves.

Everyone found some great little treasures, there was some friendly blitz games played and we were lucky to have local writer Bob Basalla there with us to talk about chess and the movies. I left with fellow US member Robert Coffman to the airport but I know others continued with some more chess activity.



Bob Basalla with Michael Negele

In concluding, I think we all owe CPL a huge thanks not only for hosting our meeting, but going way beyond that in terms of friendly help in finding and copying items, and being so supportive of our needs. This was the third US meeting I have organized and it may have been the best. I only wish more of us could have attended. There were extensive pictures taken by Michael Negele which should give you a great idea of what this meeting was like.

Andy Ansel

A later letter by Michael Negele (dated 03/09/2011) to the director of the CPL, Felton Thomas, Jr. is readable for our members as well: Letter to the CPL (PDF, in our member section).



The checker world title match: Title holder Alex Moiseyev (Dublin, Ohio) vs. challenger Michele Borghetti (Italy)

The simultaneously (Friday/Saturday) held world title match of checkers which took place in the auditorium of the CPL and which was accompanied by an exhibition should be mentioned shortly. Unfortunately the general interest was very poor, apart from the two players and five officials only five spectators could be spotted. We offer a selection of photos in this [picture gallery](#).



Bob van de Velde at the bronze gate to the Eastman Reading Garden.

A short [picture series](#) is devoted to the **Eastman Reading Garden** of the library which shows all kinds of chess relations as well. You will find more information about this original garden on the pages www.cpl.org/TheLibrary/... and www.clevelandpublicart.org/....

Our last two galleries (with 38 pictures each) offer attractive views and impressions of Cleveland:
[Impressions of Cleveland I](#) / [Impressions of Cleveland II](#)