

**Minutes for Emily Dickinson International Society
Annual Members' Meeting
Alumni House Large Meeting Room
Amherst, Massachusetts
Saturday, August 8, 2015**

President's Welcome and Report

EDIS President Martha Nell Smith called the meeting to order at 9:48 a.m. Fifty-two members were present. Smith stated that the meeting would cover the approval of the minutes for the August 10, 2014, Members' Meeting; the treasurer's report; a membership committee report; a report on the 2015 annual meeting in session; a report on the 2016 EDIS Conference in Paris; tentative plans for future annual meetings through 2020; a nominations committee report; a report on the research circle; and an update on the Emily Dickinson Museum, including a sneak preview of *Phosphorescence*, an Emily Dickinson documentary.

Smith thanked retiring EDIS board members for their service. Suzanne Juhasz, founding member and founder of the *Emily Dickinson Journal*, will step down. Also, Cristanne Miller is retiring from her position as editor of the *Journal*.

James Guthrie, who has assumed the position of *Journal* editor, thanked Miller for helping him to prepare for his new role. Guthrie also asked members for their indulgence and patience as he learns. He requested that members submit articles for the *Journal*.

Smith introduced two new board members: Michelle Kohler, who will assume Juhasz's board seat, and Faith Barrett, new member-at-large. Smith pointed out that the board transition from older members to younger members assures that EDIS will live on.

Smith said that the 2015 Annual Meeting represented more collaboration between EDIS and the Emily Dickinson Museum than ever before. Smith described the discussion in August 2014 on the verandah of the Lord Jeffrey hotel that resulted in the theme for this year's meeting. Vice President Barbara Mossberg was sitting with Jane Wald, director of the Emily Dickinson Museum, Alexandra Socarides, Eliza Richards, and Smith. Mossberg said that since the 2015 meeting would be held in Amherst, the theme should be "Dickinson in her elements." This weekend has been the result. Smith pointed out that Wald has been on the ground ever since. The Museum staff has been key in making sure that everything runs on time and that EDIS has everything from nametags to programs. Smith announced that Brooke Steinhouser, the new program director at the Museum has taken Cindy Dickinson's place.

Approval of Minutes of the August 10, 2014, Members' Meeting

Smith introduced EDIS secretary Nancy List Pridgen, who asked for any amendments or changes to the minutes of last year's member's meeting. None were forthcoming. Jonnie Guerra made a motion for approval; Daniel L. Manheim seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Treasurer's Report for Fiscal Year July 1, 2014 – June 30, 2015

Smith introduced EDIS treasurer James Fraser. J. Fraser stated that the treasury balance was \$9,929.59 July 1, 2014, and the ending balance June 30 of this year was \$22,541.06. The balance now includes some money from the August 2015 Annual Meeting registration. More registrations and many expenses will be coming in.

J. Fraser explained that membership fees and meeting registrations are the Society's primary sources of income. The Society also gets money from donations. J. Fraser said that raising the dues for regular members from \$50 to \$60 increased EDIS's income substantially. He explained that Johns Hopkins University keeps \$37.50 from each regular membership to pay for publication of the *Emily Dickinson Journal*. Now the Society receives \$22.50 back from each regular membership, whereas they used to receive only \$12.50.

J. Fraser said that the Society's annual expenses include publishing the *Emily Dickinson Bulletin*, which last year cost, \$5,489; Scholar in Amherst award, which was not presented this year; and gifts to the Emily Dickinson Museum of \$2,000 and the Jones Library of \$1,000. EDIS has annual fixed expenses of approximately \$8,500.

J. Fraser said he reported last year that the IRS situation had been straightened out. He now reported that as of May 15, 2010, retroactively, donors to EDIS could claim a tax exemption. Members who gave a significant amount of money to EDIS would have to file a new form, but they now can take that deduction.

Membership Committee Report

Smith introduced Elizabeth Petrino, chair of the EDIS Membership Committee. Petrino said that members of the committee include Alexandra Socarides, who has been organizing young scholars; Cindy MacKenzie, who is in charge of new members; Kate Allen (Dunning), who represents graduate students; and a new member, Midori Asihina, who will be leading the Society's efforts with international members.

Petrino reported that the Society has 288 active subscribers, which include 156 regular members, 25 student members, and 28 associate members. This reflects a growth of seven members since the EDIS Board met on August 6.

Petrino described some ways the committee is planning to recruit new members. She said Socarides and Richards had twenty-seven participants and five leaders participate in the Institute this year. Immediately after this meeting, Petrino and Socarides plan to invite all Critical Institute participants not already EDIS members to join EDIS. Socarides will lead an effort to raise travel funds for graduate students to attend the 2016 EDIS Conference in Paris and participate in a critical institute there. Petrino said this year's renewal form would contain a space where renewing members will be invited to donate to the graduate travel fund.

Petrino stated that Cindy MacKenzie continues to send out packets to new members. Dickinson pins and magnets are included in new member packets. She said these pins and magnets would continue to be on sale the rest of this weekend, and they would make excellent gifts. Petrino also stated that while MacKenzie was attending the conference in Shanghai, she noticed a significant interest in Dickinson in China, so with Asahina's assistance, the committee should be able to focus on recruiting international members. The committee plans to send the Shanghai conference attendees invitations to join EDIS.

Kate Allen (Dunning) has made a number of inroads in the past five years in recruiting graduate students to join. Allen has developed a listserv for graduate students, a list of school contacts, and a website, <http://www.edisgrad.org/>, which has a link to EDIS membership. Petrino said that Allen is looking for a graduate student to help her organize and maintain this website, and asked that anyone interested please contact Allen. Petrino spoke briefly on the difficulties encountered by members trying to renew their membership since Alta Anthony retired and Robert White Goodman took over

membership duties as EDIS contact with Johns Hopkins University Press. They involved timely notifications of members that their renewal was due and problems confronting members who struggled to renew their membership online using the new renewal system. Petrino assisted several members with this system.

The membership committee will be sending out renewal notifications and forms by mail, along with a membership letter and a letter from EDIS's president describing activities of the Society. Petrino will also send an email notification to members, reminding them to renew. Members will be able to renew via snail mail or electronically. New members will receive welcome emails, in addition to their new membership packet, which will come via regular mail.

Petrino also posted an invitation to join the society to EDIS's Facebook page; she will make a note also to Twitter. Petrino and the membership committee will meet after the members' meeting to confer about membership strategies to recruit new members. The committee will send an invitation again to authors who have recently published in the *Emily Dickinson Journal* to join the Society. Petrino encouraged anyone interested in volunteering for the membership committee to do so.

2015 Annual Meeting

Smith asked Wald to speak briefly about the annual meeting, now in session.

Poetry sessions and museum activities, organized around the four elements of earth, air, water, and fire, have been taking place alongside the Institute. They will continue on Saturday. Wald spoke about the pleasure she had organizing these activities, which are being presented on a collaborative basis with the Natural History Museum at Amherst College and with the Kestral Land Trust, a conservation organization in Amherst. Activities include walking on the Emily Dickinson Literary trail and listening to the Red Skies Ensemble after the EDIS banquet. Saturday afternoon at the Evergreens, a jazz performance will be presented on Martha Dickinson Bianchi's Steinway piano. The Amherst Museum will be open at 5:30 Saturday evening for those who want to look at Dickinson's white dress and some of Mabel Loomis Todd's travel artifacts and memorabilia. The Amherst History Museum is in the center of town right next to the Jones Library.

Wald thanked Amherst College for their generosity in helping EDIS with the food, the services, and the space.

2016 EDIS International Conference in Paris

Smith introduced Antoine Cazé, who presented plans for next year's conference in Paris. Cazé explained that the theme would be "Experimental Dickinson." The conference will be held the last weekend in June because the universities will be closed in August; there will be no colleagues, no students, only tourists in Paris in August.

The location will be the Cité Internationale Universitaire de Paris, located in a beautiful park just on the outskirts of Paris. It is made up of residences and dorms for international students, a house for each country. There's a United States house, a British house, a Japanese house, a German house. All these places have facilities to hold artistic events and also rooms for conference workshops and sessions. Three of Cazé's colleagues at his university are the heads of three of these houses. It is fifteen minutes away from downtown Paris by metro, and it is also walkable. There are hotels nearby and hotels downtown.

Cazé and Smith reported that on the EDIS website a site for the conference is already underway. Here members can ask questions and keep up with the planning and information about the conference, including artistic events and photos.

Cazé stated that Sophie Vasset, the head of the American house, is also a stage director, who works with a students' drama workshop. For the conference she has agreed to create a specific performance around Dickinson's poems, which her students will present. Cazé said he is a choir conductor, and his vocal group will present a piece Cazé composed from Dickinson's poems. Cazé also commissioned a short work for the conference by a French composer, Edith Canat de Chizy, a member of the French Institut des Beaux-Arts de l' Academie Francaise, who has already written five pieces on Dickinson.

Cazé is tentatively planning an art exhibit, working with an art gallery in Paris. He will invite several artists working with, around, or about Dickinson. In addition, Clark Lunberry from the University of North Florida will be presenting an installation on Dickinson's work using transparent letters on glass and water. It will be permanently on display for the duration of the conference. A possible additional event will include French book artist Claire Illouz, who wants to display her artist's book on Dickinson called *Summer Boughs*. In addition, Cazé added that the new edition of poems edited by Cristanne Miller might be out.

Cazé assured members that in Paris accommodations and restaurants are readily available. He will work out a plan that will suit everybody.

Smith assured members that Cazé would be happy to answer any questions during the remainder of the conference and that he also has an area on the EDIS website where he will make announcements and answer questions.

Possibilities for Future Meetings

Smith announced several possible sites for future EDIS meetings and conference. They include Asilomar in California, who are working out expenses with EDIS. It is really a retreat place, which would make for an intimate annual meeting and conference and a chance for the board to have a retreat and for EDIS members to retreat and think about future directions of the Society. Smith said that EDIS would be coming to Amherst every few years.

Faith Barrett said she would be happy to host a meeting in Pittsburgh. Smith and Barrett mentioned the technology and three rivers with many bridges and railroads there.

Smith urged members to think about places for annual meetings and reminded them that suggestions are always welcome. She said that the main purpose of having annual meetings and of conferences is to bring members together and to also bring together Dickinson scholars, Dickinson artists, and writers of all kinds who are working on Dickinson. She said that EDIS welcomes all kinds of approaches to Emily Dickinson because Dickinson is quite capacious.

Nominations Committee Report

Smith introduced Páraic Finnerty, chair of the EDIS Nominations Committee. He listed the members of the committee for the past year: Antoine Cazé, Jonnie Guerra, Eleanor Heginbotham, and Eliza Richards. Finnerty reported that the Society elected a new member-at-large, Faith Barrett, and elected Michelle Kohler to join the board because Suzanne Juhasz has stepped down. The board also re-elected the following members to the board whose term had expired: Paul Crumbley, James Fraser, and Alexandra Socarides.

Finnerty announced that EDIS is going to have a member-at-large election this year. He reported that so few people voted in last year's member-at-large election and he wants to increase the vote this year. He also encouraged members to run for member-at-large – artists, writers, school teachers, students – all members are welcome to run and serve on the EDIS board.

He asked that those interested in nominating themselves or others to talk to him after the meeting and to send those nominations to him ideally by the first of October. If interested members could send a statement about themselves or the person they want to nominate and why they would be effective board members, that would help the nominations committee and members know about nominees. He said the board wants to reach out beyond academia so that all members are represented. The new nominations committee would then discuss these names and set up an election. The committee would have the ballots sent to EDIS members in their copies of the *Bulletin*, and members would be able to vote by paper, resulting in more members voting.

Emily Dickinson Museum Update

Smith introduced Wald, who gave an update on the Emily Dickinson Museum.

Wald stated that in the program area the Museum followed through with plans to move on to interpretation. Through this last year the Museum had been highlighting immersive theatre programs, which Wald reported have turned out to be quite successful. Therefore, plans are to continue with those initiatives. Both theatre productions are collaborations. One is with a newly formed theatre company called Theatre Truck, whose mission is to develop and produce site-specific performances. The Museum co-produced with them a portrayal of various facets of Dickinson's personality, using the Homestead rooms and grounds as the stage. The result was an intimate interactive kind of performance.

Wald said the Museum would be expanding that approach to other art forms. Being able to bring music into and out of the houses will probably be one of the next things the Museum will be experimenting with. Saturday evening, Tomoko Ozawa will sing her compositions of Dickinson's poetry, accompanying herself on Martha Dickinson Bianchi's restored piano at the Evergreens.

Wald said the Museum would be reapplying to the National Endowment for the Humanities for another professional development workshop for kindergarten through twelfth grade teachers. That workshop has also been an important initiative for the EDM, the one way to have the greatest possible impact on public education across the country.

Wald reported that much of the Museum's activity this year has involved capital and restoration projects. Last year and this year the Emily Dickinson bedroom restoration continues. It will end in mid-August, when the wallpaper will be hung. She stressed the importance of Dickinson's room to the Museum's visitors. She stated that this year, the Museum drew about 13,500 visitors on site or to their programs. It has had another 300,000 unique visitors to the website and 10,000 – 15,000 Facebook and Twitter followers. These numbers keep increasing all the time.

In particular, the visitors who come to the Homestead and the Evergreens are looking for some kind of practical, concrete, physical touchstone to help them understand more deeply this enigmatic poet. And for that reason, the Museum is trying to rehabilitate and restore as faithfully as possible the 19th Century environment in which Dickinson lived and moved and wrote.

Wald said that restoration of Dickinson's bedroom, which was her intimate space, her writing studio, has generated a lot of enthusiasm and support. Next year, the Museum plans to reconstruct Dickinson's conservatory and has raised about a third of the funds for that.

Wald said that right now more of the Museum's restoration and capital projects are taking place on the grounds of the Evergreens, with the repair and repainting of the exterior of the house.

About ten years ago, the Museum developed a master plan that provided a rationale for its restoration program, establishing periods of significance for each house, and for the grounds, trying to recreate the period in which those significant activities or that significant individual was associated with the structure. So for the Homestead, the period of Dickinson's adult life – 1855 to 1886, her writing life – was chosen.

For the Evergreens the plan focused on a period representative of the décor that overlaps the period of Emily Dickinson's life – approximately 1880 to approximately 1913, the end of Susan Dickinson's life. And then the grounds will also overlap Emily Dickinson's life. The exterior painting of the Evergreens to its 1880 colors has been completed just recently. Shutters and windows are offsite being repaired and painted. Previously the Evergreens had been restored to its original 1856 colors.

Diseased and inappropriate trees are being removed. Some might prove a risk to persons and property, as well as to the young hemlock trees recently planted, which need to be protected from infection.

What happens between now and the conservatory reconstruction is installation of the fire suppression system in the Homestead. This is critically important. This will be followed when money can be raised by fire suppression for the Evergreens. Heating and cooling systems that are perfect for historic houses and especially for collections will be installed.

The Museum has seen transitions in staff, with Brooke Steinhauser replacing to Cindy Dickinson, who has a new position at Hancock Shaker village, which is right down the street from her two girls. A transition has taken place on the Museum's board because some members had reached had reached the term limit. The Museum board has welcomed three or four new board members, including Karen Sanchez-Eppler, who has returned to the board.

Wald reported that there is one other thing that has to do with a project. Producer-screen writer Terence Davies has completed filming a biographical feature film about Emily Dickinson, which stars Cynthia Nixon as Emily and Jennifer Ely as Lavinia. It will be released next spring or summer. Because of inaccuracies in this film (which have been credited to creative license), the producers wanted to pair that feature film with a documentary, which will be titled *Phosphorescence*. Cynthia Nixon will be the narrator of this documentary. The producers are seeking some funding for the documentary, which is a somewhat more independent project than the film. During the EDIS conference, members invited to go to the kickstarter site on the Internet, following directions on a green paper in registration packets. For a \$30 donation to this project, they will send the donor a DVD of the completed documentary. This offer ends on August 9, 2015, at midnight. The producers sent the Museum a trailer, which Wald said she would show at the meeting.

EDIS Chapter Group Update

Eleanor Heginbotham, chair of the EDIS Chapter Group Committee, reported that EDIS has local chapters in New York, California, and several other locations. She encouraged members, saying that any person who is a member of EDIS can start a chapter group. Lois Kackley, co-chair of the committee, said that Laura MacLeod plans to start a Spanish-speaking chapter group in Amherst.

Pridgen thanked the Amherst EDIS group for the hard work and legwork in getting the conference set up and running.

Emily Dickinson Research Circle

Smith introduced Ellen Hart, who announced that the Research Circle would meet at 9:00 a.m. Sunday in the Alumni House large meeting room. Hart pointed out that no Dickinson project is considered too small to get two or three minutes to present it. She said that people could exchange addresses and make connections. Anyone with questions was invited to see Hart. She assured them they would be welcome to come to the research circle Sunday morning.

Video of Documentary Trailer

Wald presented the video trailer of the upcoming documentary, *Phosphorous*.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 10:57 a.m.