



LAWS OF DEMAND AND SUPPLY

Ross E. Davies

This is the introduction from the first full-size installment in a new annual we've started. It's called the *Baker Street Almanac*. On our website (www.greenbag.org), you can read most of the new almanac for free, and also buy the gewgaw-laden limited print edition, if there are any left.

– *The Editors*

I WILL BEGIN BY EXPLAINING why the *Green Bag* is publishing a second almanac (the one you are reading now – the *Baker Street Almanac*) when we are already quite happy, and busy, with our first series (the *Green Bag Almanac & Reader*). Then I will briefly sketch some of what we have (and have not) done in this volume, and what we hope to do in years to come.

DEMAND

Every year since 2006 we have published a *Green Bag Almanac & Reader* filled with two kinds of goodies: “exemplary legal writing from the year just passed” and “useful and entertaining tidbits for lawyers.”¹ From the start, the main idea behind combining the legal writing and the tidbits has been to create a publication that is both professionally instructive and distractingly interesting for a fairly wide range of readers: some come for the exemplary legal writing and stay for the useful and entertaining tidbits;

Ross Davies is a Green Bag editor. This little essay first appeared under the same title on pages 1-4 of the 2019 Baker Street Almanac.

¹ See, e.g., greenbag.org/green_bag_press/almanacs/almanacs.html.

others come for the useful and entertaining tidbits and stay for the exemplary legal writing. That approach required (and still requires) us to keep the distractions interesting year after year by varying the flavors of our useful and entertaining tidbits. (The legal writing tends to take care of itself because there are so many excellent legal writers, and such a rainbow of legal matters, that we never know where the exemplars are going to come from or what they are going to be about.) And we have indeed varied the flavors. Themes of the *Almanac & Reader* have ranged from baseball to Shakespeare, from breakfast to Thomas Nast, from presidential elections to Sherlock Holmes.

It is that last theme – Holmes the fictional detective (not Holmes the real-life essayist, nor his son the lawyer) – that has caused us trouble. We published a Holmes-themed *Almanac & Reader* in 2015. Reader response was so extraordinarily positive, and demands for a sequel so numerous and emphatic, that we violated our tradition of variation, postponed a planned whist-themed *Almanac & Reader*, and put out a second Holmes-themed edition in 2016. There was plenty of demand for a third round of Holmes, but enough was enough. In 2017 we published a long-planned *Almanac & Reader* tribute to Thurgood Marshall, and in 2018 we finally put out our whist book. In 2019 we have another new theme. In other words, we have moved on from the idea of another Holmes-themed *Almanac & Reader*.

Which is not to say that we have been ignoring the wishes of our readers, many of whom continue to encourage us to generate more Sherlock Holmes stuff. (Our sense is that they are not a majority of our readers, but a substantial minority – probably a few hundred.) We have included Holmes-oriented stories and related work in our flagship journal (the *Green Bag*) and our experimental journal (the *Journal of Law*), in our new good-writing series (*Re-readings*), and in premiums we occasionally issue to our “Extravagant” subscribers. But that is getting to feel like a bit too much as well. All the publications I’ve mentioned have a law-and-variety orientation, not a law-and-Holmes-and-variety orientation. Persistent use, even at a relatively low level, of the same spice in all the *Green Bag*’s dishes is not to our taste. And yet our readers clearly enjoy the material, and there are so very many opportunities to braid strands of law and Holmesian detective fiction in useful and entertaining ways. Ignoring those readers, and ignoring the possibilities in the material, is not to our taste either.

Laws of Demand and Supply

Enter the *Baker Street Almanac* – our latest effort to strike a satisfactory balance. With it, we are moving away from putting a little bit of Sherlock Holmes into many of our legal publications and toward putting a little bit of law into an annual Holmes publication. We will see how that goes for us and for our readers. We are optimistic.

SUPPLY

And now some specifics about the *Baker Street Almanac*. This edition is not the first.² In early 2018 we issued a small pamphlet to raise awareness of the project among prospective authors and readers.³ This edition is, however, the first big block of words, numbers, and pictures that typifies a conventional almanac. But it is not yet an excellently conventional almanac, because it is strikingly incomplete for a publication that aspires – as this one does – to broad, deep, and even coverage of its subject area.

On the subject area itself, we are already all the way home. We know what it is: documentation of the study and enjoyment of Sherlock Holmes and related characters, with a focus on creating year-by-year (and cumulative) time capsules of material likely to be useful and entertaining both now and later.⁴ In each volume we will also sprinkle a few freestanding, one-off works of various sorts (listed under the “Commentaries, Histories, and Diversions” heading in the table of contents), but most of our attention will be on the thoughtful description of work done elsewhere.

On breadth of coverage of that subject area, however, we are a long, long way from home. Consider the first big section near the front of this book, titled “Around the World in 2018.” It is the work of first-rate Sherlock Holmes experts from around the globe, each giving a year-in-review report on Holmes-related business in their home country or region. But there are obvious and serious holes – missing countries (China, Denmark, Iraq, Spain, and Switzerland, for example) and even continents (Africa and South America, obviously, and surely there should be at least a bit of relevant news from

² Nor, for that matter, is it the first Holmes-oriented almanac. See, for example, Svend Petersen, *A Sherlock Holmes Almanac* 12-19 (1956; 2003) (revised and expanded by Carl William Thiel, Karen Murdock, Frank Darlington, Edwin Christenson, and George A. Vanderburgh).

³ See greenbag.org/BSA/bsa.html.

⁴ With some special attention to the law, of course, when opportunity knocks.

Antarctica too). So, while the reports we have here are quite well done, there are too few of them. We are looking out for opportunities to include more.

On depth, we are in a similar situation. In the next big section, titled “Lists and Other Records,” we have barely started.⁵ Yes, there are excellent entries on several topics, from law (of course) to cosplay to elementary education to numismatics to podcasting, and more. But again, there are many hard-to-miss gaps. Where is the coverage of theater and film, painting and singing, and all the other arts? Or the coverage of chronologies? Of journals and scholarship? Of food and drink?! I could go on and on. And then there are entries in which time-pressed authors have given us just enough to indicate the areas in which they intend to report and write more deeply in the future. And so, again, while the reports we have are quite well done, there are too few. And again we hope to include more as the years pass.

Finally and obviously, with so many gaps and dips, evenness is something we can only look forward to.

So, this early *Baker Street Almanac* is much like the early installments of the *Green Bag Almanac & Reader*: maybe a good idea and maybe a good start, but with much to prove and a long way to go. Here’s hoping our new almanac’s readers turn out to be as helpful in the near future as our old one’s were (and continue to be) in enlarging and improving the published product. Please send your criticisms and suggestions to editors@greenbag.org.

Some enlargements and improvements are already underway. For example, one of the great publications that we seek to emulate – *Wisden Cricketers’ Almanack*,⁶ commonly called simply *Wisden* and commonly described as “the Bible of Cricket” – has for more than 150 years featured a “Births and Deaths” biographical register of significant figures in the cricketering world. Linda and Terry Hunt are working on a similar register for the

⁵ The section sandwiched between “Around the World in 2018” and “Lists and Other Records” – titled “Scuttlebutt” – is *sui generis*, perfect, and complete because it is simply a compilation of monthly newsletters written by Peter Blau, the Schelling point of Sherlock Holmes scholarship and society. So, no hand-wringing is called for there.

⁶ *Wisden* does three things in its annual brick of 1,500+ pages about the world of cricket: (1) it provides a compact, authoritative, and comprehensive summary of the long history of its subject area, (2) it delves in greater detail into the past year, and (3) it spices things up with some pictures and essays and the like. Perhaps someday the *Baker Street Almanac* will be doing as much for its subject area.

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world of Sherlock Holmes. (Presumably the two registers will overlap in at least one place. *Wisden* lists “Conan Doyle Dr Sir Arthur Ignatius” and notes, “Creator of Sherlock Holmes; his only victim in first-class cricket was W.G. Grace.”⁷) Look for it in the 2020 *Baker Street Almanac*.

Finally, there is the matter of getting the *Baker Street Almanac* into the hands of readers. Like the content of the book itself, production and distribution are works in progress. Tinkering will happen. For now, though, the approach is pretty straightforward. The 2019 version takes two forms:

- An online version of the 2019 *Baker Street Almanac* will be available for free at the *Green Bag*'s website (www.greenbag.org).
- An ink-on-paper version – a limited edition, some copies of which may have a few accessories (packaged with the book or obtainable by solving puzzles or following instructions in and around the book⁸) – will be available for purchase, also at the *Green Bag*'s website.

The two versions do have differences other than format and accessories, including: (1) the ink-on-paper version is almost entirely in black-and-white, including all the photographs (there are many of them), while much of the online version is in color (including many of the photographs); (2) the ink-on-paper version has a small number of extra pages; and (3) the covers are not the same.

GRATITUDE, AND AN APPEAL

Thank you for reading. We are sure you know some facts that we missed or mangled. Telling us (or telling an author directly) about them is the way to get them added or repaired for next year. So, please help us start a “Correspondence” section in next year’s *Baker Street Almanac*: Let us know how we can do better and what else we should be doing.



⁷ *Wisden Cricketers' Almanack 2015* at 1452.

⁸ The plan is to include a complete checklist of accessories associated with this year’s *Baker Street Almanac* somewhere in next year’s edition.