

Connect!

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Ann Miller to be Honored at ABL

For more than half a century, the late Professor Ann Vardaman Miller was connected to Baylor's English Department—first as a student (she earned a B.A. in 1949, serving as an assistant to Dr. A. J. Armstrong, and a master's in 1951) and eventually as a Master Teacher of English herself. So it is fitting that a former student has stepped forward to provide a tribute to the legendary Miller in Armstrong Browning Library, the location of her first campus office.

An anonymous donor has begun the process of dedicating a stained glass window in the Cox Reception Hall, on the ground floor of the library, to Miller. The hall is already home to five windows, each one depicting a scene in Italy, a country that had a profound influence on Robert and Elizabeth Barrett Browning and their poetry during their residence there. The sixth window, which will take about a year to complete, will be dedicated to Miller's memory.

"Ann would love this," said her good friend of 50 years, former English professor Dr. Clement Goode. "She loved Dr. A., and she had a number of good stories that she told about him," he said. He believes Miller would also appreciate the story behind the window scene—a story that hints that the poetess Browning may have had a lot in common with Miller, who also wrote poetry.

(See Ann Miller on page 2)




The Vallombrosa Window in ABL's Cox Reception Hall will be dedicated to the late Ann Miller, a Baylor professor and former student of Dr. A.J. Armstrong.

(Photo by Jon Patillo)

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Connect@BU Libraries



This issue of *Connect!* showcases many of the advancement projects underway in the Baylor University Libraries.

The lead article highlights our beloved Ann Miller and her lasting legacy to her students who, in turn, desire to leave a lasting legacy by dedicating a stained glass window in the Armstrong Browning Library in her memory. Vallombrosa, a monastery near Florence, Italy, was one of the special sites Elizabeth Barrett Browning wished to visit. You will enjoy reading the account of Elizabeth's determination to travel to Vallombrosa.

2007 marks the 50th anniversary of the Class of 1957 and their class gift to the Libraries. To mark this landmark occasion, the Class of '57 will seek to add to their original endowment gift. May their tribe increase!

These are but two examples of the exciting stories in this issue of *Connect!*. I trust you will read it front to back.

— Bill Hair,
Interim Dean of Libraries

Ann Miller (Continued from page 1)

The window will feature Vallombrosa, a monastery near Florence. In 1847, Barrett Browning had her heart set on a visit to the scenic retreat, mentioned by John Milton in *Paradise Lost*, to escape the summer heat of Florence and find inspiration. She wrote to her sister of spending most of the summer there in the "monastery like an eagle's nest . . . in the midst of mountains, rocks, precipices, waterfalls, drifts of snow, and magnificent chestnut forests."

Getting to Vallombrosa was not easy. First, the Brownings had to obtain permission for the visit from the Archbishop of Florence and the Abbot-General. Then, the trip itself was arduous—it involved sitting in a wine basket while being dragged up the cliffs by oxen. At the top, the scenery was all the Brownings had dreamed of, but disappointment awaited Barrett Browning. The monks of the monastery could not be persuaded to allow a woman to cross their threshold, so she had to stay in a house outside the monastery walls. (In addition, Barrett Browning noted, the bread was "detestable.") They stayed for only a few days.

The slight to her gender was not taken lightly by Barrett Browning. "Father Egidio led him [Robert] to the more salient places and showed him all the sights hidden from my eyes," she complained to her sister. "For of course they wouldn't permit an unclean beast like me to pass the threshold of the monastery or chapel . . . oh no! Out of spite, however, when nobody was looking, I put my foot through the gateway and stamped on the gravel of their courtyard."

Cynthia Burgess, Armstrong Browning's curator of books and printed materials and the coordinator for the window project, said that friends and family of Ann Miller have agreed that the window is an especially appropriate tribute to her memory. She said, "The enthusiasm and determination that Elizabeth showed in wanting to get to Vallombrosa and her feistiness in the whole situation are things that Ann Miller would very much have appreciated—especially the stamping of the foot."

Despite the brevity of the trip, the Brownings were not disappointed by the scenery of Vallombrosa, and both poets penned lines about the memorable retreat. Eight lines from Barrett Browning's poem *Casa Guidi Windows* will be the centerpiece of the new window, describing Vallombrosa as a place where "pilgrims leave their souls." Burgess said that the window will also include depictions of the monastery, the woods, the waterfalls, the native foliage, and the scene of oxen pulling the basket up the cliffs. A dedication to Miller will be in the bottom left corner.

Though a generous gift has underwritten a major portion of the window's cost, library officials and the anonymous donor want friends and former students of Miller to have the opportunity to contribute to the project. Donations can be made by using the back panel of this newsletter or by calling Mary Goolsby at 254.710.6735.

—Meg Cullar
Baylor Alumni Association

The Elizabeth Barrett Browning quotations are from *The Letters of Elizabeth Barrett Browning to Her Sister Arabella*, edited by Scott Lewis, Wedgestone Press, 2002.

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