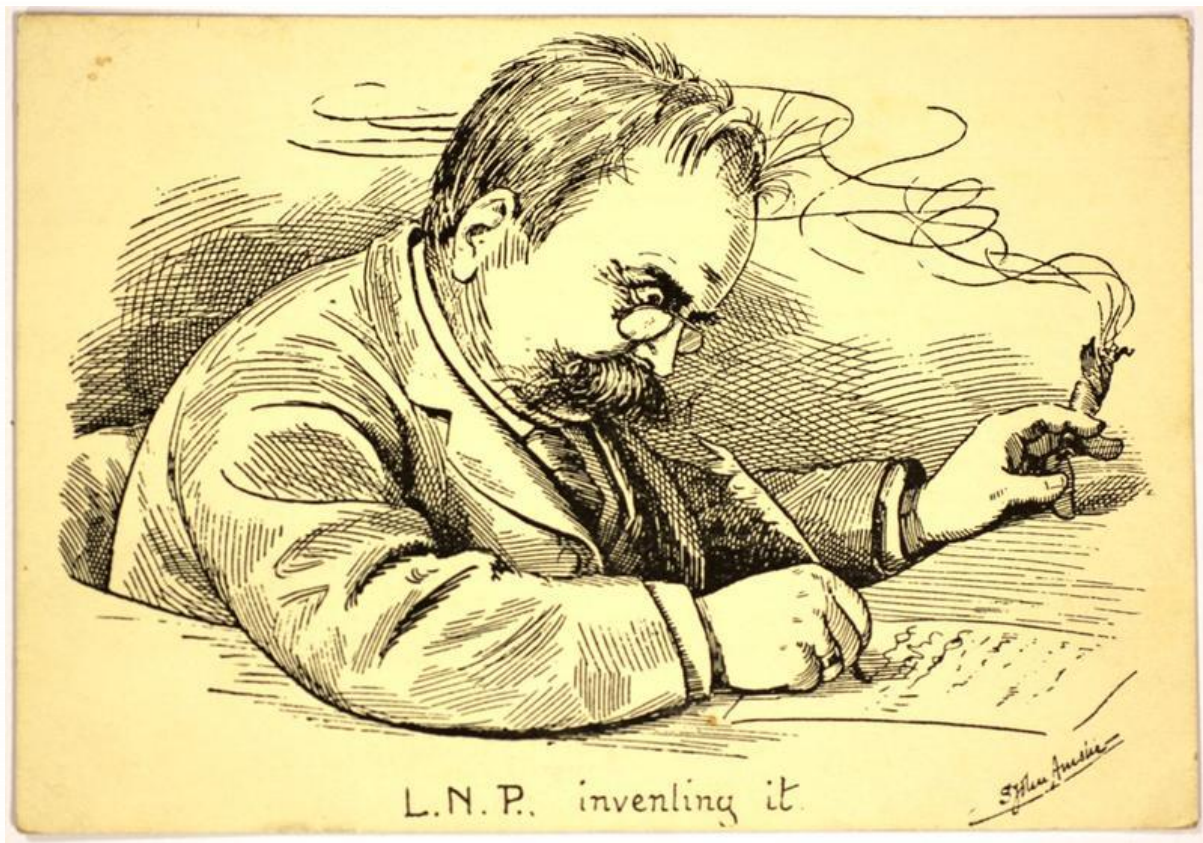


"L.N.P. Inventing it" and Relics of Warwick Pageant, CR367/35/10 and PH352/187/59

Last month saw us commemorating the 90th anniversary of the 1930 Warwick pageant. For August's Document of the Month, we have decided to focus on the first pageant to take place in Warwick in 1906. We have chosen two items from our collections relating to this. The first is this caricature sketch drawn by Ralph St. John Ainslie captioned "L.N.P. Inventing It" (catalogue reference CR367/35/10). L.N.P refers to Louis Napoleon Parker, who was enlisted as Pageant Master for the 1906 Warwick pageant. The sketch shows Parker sitting at a desk writing out his script for a pageant, possibly the Sherbourne pageant in 1905. This sketch was used in Parker's biography, entitled *Several of my Lives*. Ainslie was a pupil of Parkers at Sherbourne School between 1873 and 1880¹. Sherbourne School Archive also has a copy of this sketch.



L.N.P. Inventing it, Image courtesy of Warwickshire County Record Office, CR367/35/10, image credit Ralph St John Ainslie

¹ Information taken from <https://www.flickr.com/photos/sherborneschoolarchives/30784382973> (accessed 02/07/2020).

We have also chosen this postcard of relics of the Warwick Pageant dated July 4th, 1906 (catalogue reference PH352/187/59). The postcard shows the crowds attending the pageant outside the Castle gates and on Castle Hill in Warwick. It was obviously a very well attended event, judging by the crowds in the photograph!



Relics of the Warwick Pageant, Image courtesy of Warwickshire County Record Office, PH352/187/59.

Warwick Pageant

The idea for Warwick pageant came from the Warwick journalist Edward Hicks in 1905. He saw a comment in the Daily Telegraph newspaper, which remarked about Warwick being an ideal place for a historical pageant. Support for the idea quickly grew, and a provisional Pageant Committee was set up in July 1905. This was soon followed by the establishment of an Executive Committee in Jury Street at what is now Pageant House².

The committee decided to enlist Louis Napoleon Parker as the Pageant Master, after his success with Sherbourne Pageant the year before. Preparations began, and it was soon decided that the pageant would run for the week beginning 2nd July 1906.

² Information gathered from *The Warwick Pageant of 1906: Preparations*, Angela Bartie, Linda Fleming, Mark Freeman, Tom Hulme and Paul Readman
<https://www.ourwarwickshire.org.uk/content/article/warwick-pageant-1906-preparations> (accessed 02/07/2020).

Almost everything used for the pageant was made locally, scenes on display included Shakespeare, Guy of Warwick, the Earls of Warwick and religion. Focus was made on Warwick throughout history and patriotism. Notably, no mention was made of the English Civil War, or the Reformation³.

The Warwick Pageant of 1906 was viewed as a great success. Visitors came from far and wide, and almost all the performances sold out. Following on from this success, further pageants were held, notably in 1930 and 1953. There were even pageants held as recently as 1996⁴.

Louis Napoleon Parker

Louis Napoleon Parker was a composer and playwright born in Calvados, France, to an American father and an English mother. He grew up in several European countries, and was fluent in French, German and Italian⁵. Parker was educated at the Royal Academy of Music, and he was Director of Music at Sherbourne School, Dorset during the period 1877-1896. He then moved to London and was made a fellow at the Royal Academy of Music in 1898⁶.

Parker began to experience deafness in the early 1890's and turned to London and the theatre. He wrote plays such as *The Cardinal* and *Disraeli*⁷.

In 1905, Parker was invited to organise a pageant in Sherbourne, and thus his pageant career started. Speaking in 1911 to The New York Times, Parker remarked on his career in pageants as the time of his life. He estimated that 15,00 performers and audiences of 250,000 had been involved in the pageants he had organised⁸. As well as pageants in Sherbourne and Warwick, Parker also went on to organise pageants for the towns of Bury St Edmonds, Colchester, York and Dover. His pageants centred around the celebration of English history and values. Parker even became a British subject in 1914, just before the outbreak of the First World War⁹.

³ Information taken from *The Warwick Pageant of 1906: Pageant Week*, Angela Bartie, Linda Fleming, Mark Freeman, Tom Hulme and Paul Readman, <https://www.ourwarwickshire.org.uk/content/article/warwick-pageant-1906-pageant-week> (accessed 02/07/2020).

⁴ Information gathered from *The Warwick Pageant of 1906: Legacy*, Angela Bartie, Linda Fleming, Mark Freeman, Tom Hulme and Paul Readman, <https://www.ourwarwickshire.org.uk/content/article/warwick-pageant-1906-legacy> (accessed 02/07/2020)

⁵ Information gathered from Wikipedia contributors, "Louis N. Parker," *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Louis_N._Parker&oldid=964443072 (accessed July 1, 2020)

⁶ Information gathered from Wikisource contributors, "The Encyclopedia Americana (1920)/Parker, Louis Napoleon," *Wikisource*, [https://en.wikisource.org/w/index.php?title=The_Encyclopedia_Americana_\(1920\)/Parker,_Louis_Napoleon&oldid=3854362](https://en.wikisource.org/w/index.php?title=The_Encyclopedia_Americana_(1920)/Parker,_Louis_Napoleon&oldid=3854362) (accessed July 1, 2020)

⁷ Information gathered from Wikipedia contributors, "Louis N. Parker," *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Louis_N._Parker&oldid=964443072 (accessed July 1, 2020)

⁸ Information taken from *Louis N. Parker: Than Man Who Wrote "Pomander Walk"*, New York Times, 08/01/1911, <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1911/01/08/104853833.pdf> (accessed 02/07/2020 via Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louis_N._Parker).

⁹ Information taken from Columbia University Libraries Archival Collections, *Louis Napoleon Parker Papers*, http://www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/archival/collections/ldpd_4079198/index.html (accessed 03/07/2020)

In 1878, Parker married Georgiana Bessie Calder, the daughter of a Sherbourne merchant. They had two daughters, Elsa and Dorothy. Dorothy later went on to become an actress, starring in her father's play *Pomander Walk*. Parker spent his later years in Devon, where he passed away in Bishopsteignton on the 21st September 1944¹⁰.

¹⁰ Information taken from Columbia University Libraries Archival Collections, *Louis Napoleon Parker Papers*, http://www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/archival/collections/ldpd_4079198/index.html (accessed 03/07/2020)