THE EPHEMERA JOURNAL

VOLUME 20, NUMBER 1 SEPTEMBER 2017

Securing the Letter

BY ARTHUR H. GROTEN

The ephemera of letter communication organizes primarily around the act of writing (advertisements for pens, inks, paper, as well as templates for the content). But of paramount importance to the sender of a letter was privacy of the contents; security of transmission whether handled privately or through a postal service. The study of ephemera documenting methods used in 19th century Great Britain to secure letter communications includes those extrinsic to the letter itself (seals and wafers), as well as attempts to protect letter content with patent envelopes.[1]

Prior to 1839, postage was charged based on the number of sheets and distance; an envelope represented another sheet and increased postage cost. It was not until the introduction of the uniform Penny Post (based solely on weight) that envelopes as we know them came into general use. Initially, envelopes were not gummed and therefore had to be sealed by some other method; by the late 1840s, envelopes appeared that had glue applied to the inside of the tip of the flap. There were often designs embossed in that area to give the appearance of an applied matrix or wafer. But wafer seals were sometimes still used in conjunction with such pre-gummed, or embossed, flaps.

Even with the advent of fully gummed envelopes, wafer seals were still used, often by merchants to promote their business, products or services or by special interests such as religious or temperance groups. This practice continued well into the late 19th century when the wafer seal was gradually replaced by the poster stamp for those purposes.

Materials used in making Letter Seals

The sealing of communications with wax dates to the earliest days of writing on paper.[2] Prior to 1635, the post was a royal

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Figure 1. Examples of labels used by seal matrix makers, usually pasted to the inside of the top of the box the matrix came in.

Figure 2. A small matrix sold at the 1851 Crystal Palace Exhibition with the talismanic all-seeing eye design.

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The Ephemera Journal

The Ephemera Society of America

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The Ephemera Society of America, Inc.
P.O. Box 95
Cazenovia, NY 13035-0095
Messages & Fax: 315-655-9139
Web Site: *www.ephemerasociety.org*
E-mail: *info@ephemerasociety.org*

Volume 20, Number 1, September 2017

The Ephemera Journal (ISSN 1543-4990) is published three times a year by The Ephemera Society of America, Inc.

Dear Members and Friends:

Fifty years ago, on June 1, 1967, the Beatles released their groundbreaking album, *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band.* The celebration of this anniversary produced a deluxe box set, a documentary film, and even an auction of Beatles memorabilia and ephemera. Among the auction ephemera was an original cardboard cutout used by pop artist Sir Peter Blake to create the iconic album cover of Sgt. Pepper's. The cutout was offered at a starting bid of $48,000. Ironically, Blake was paid only 2OO pounds sterling for his cover work and apparently Apple Corps, the Beatles management company, continues to maintain that this was a fair fee.

Blake, who is considered the godfather of pop art (he summons the phrase "pop goes the easel"), has been an inveterate collector of all types of ephemera since childhood. He has gathered e.g. visiting cards of General Tom Thumb, advertising pieces, and receipts, which he incorporates into his collages. He shared an interest in collecting fairground ephemera with Andy Warhol. Sir Peter also lavishly uses ephemera and his interest in Victorian and Edwardian graphic illustration to create entire alphabets with playful and creative fonts.

I have been drawn to ephemera relating to signs and sign makers and have endeavored to collect a few items in that category. So, I was delighted to read an article about the unlikely discovery of a cache of delicate color-pencil-on-vellum working sketches, purchase orders, and correspondence belonging to New Mexico's oldest and largest neon sign-making shop, Zeon Signs. The drawings depict neon signs for gas stations, motels, theaters, bowling alleys and coffee shops for use on Route 66. Ellen Babcock, an artist and professor at the University of New Mexico, found this collection in bulky file drawers that had been placed on pallets and left outdoors under a tree. The collection is now somewhat more safely housed at the Center for Southwest Research at the University of New Mexico. You may read more about it in *The Zeon Files Art and Design of Historic Route 66 Signs*.

The Ephemera Society will be visiting bustling Miami Beach from September 21 to September 23. We plan to visit the Wolfsonian Special Collections and have a special tour of the galleries. We will also have an opportunity to explore some of the extensive holdings of the Jay I. Kislak Foundation a private, nonprofit institution that has significant books, manuscripts, documents, and photographs from the Age of Exploration to the Polar Explorations. Lastly, we will be treated to a tour of the University of Miami Special Collections, which has holdings in contemporary book arts, as well as important map collections.

We continue to solicit your ideas concerning educating young folks and students about ephemera. In a brilliant article entitled *Teaching with Ephemera* in *RBM: A Journal of Rare Books, Manuscripts, and Cultural Heritage*, Vol 9, No 1 (2008), Julia Gardner and David Pavelich present numerous concrete examples of using ephemera in classrooms at the University of Chicago. For instance, an undergraduate student, in a Graphic Design and Commerce class, examined an archival collection of the noted Chicago printing firm R.R. Donnelley and unearthed pamphlets showing the "Sprightly Spearmen" of the Wrigley chewing gum company. After further pouring through the collection, the student made a class presentation using ephemera to illustrate the marketing of chewing gum in Chicago in 1915. The authors concluded that aside from its many other uses, ephemera can simply be fun. I am pleased to end my rambling summer musings on that light note.

Bruce

Bruce Shyer
President
The Ephemera Society of America, Inc.

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prerogative and sealing was done with an armorial matrix (the device used to impress the wax, what we would call a desk seal); at that time, merchants used private posts but similar sealing methods. After 1635 and the expansion of the postal service, wax seals were employed extensively by the upper classes and gentry as well as merchants. Most commonly, the design consisted of the user's initials, coat-of-arms or appropriate heraldic symbol. Many companies engaged in seal engraving (figure 1). Most matrices were for desk use; they come in a number of sizes. (Figure 2) Many are found in ring or watch fob form. Later, a simple crosshatched matrix was used to impress the less pliable wafer seals (figure 3). The matrix was usually supplied with a "proof" impression of its incised design (figure 4).

Wax was melted using a "wax jack," dripping the wax onto the letter join or envelope flap. To assure even more protection from tampering, a piece of paper might be placed over that wax upon which was made a blind stamp with the user's seal.

Cameo ("medallion") wafers were rather thick and very fragile, popular from about 1780-1830. They were made by a different method, using pure glue mixed with a coloring agent dissolved in water to make a syrupy mix. The syrup was poured into an actual seal matrix. As it dried, it took on the intricate detail of the design. They were avidly collected, often mounted on card to be given as a keepsake. Josiah Wedgwood was one of the early makers (figure 5). They usually feature classical or genre scenes and were sold in small boxes (figure 6). Because of their fragility, the earliest types have not survived used on letters (the only one found was used in 1840, see figure 7).

There was at least one attempt to introduce a truly wax-like seal. Mr. F.R. Lewis of Cork created his "Composition Seal" around 1840, available with a number of mottoes and images. What they

Figure 3. The use of a crosshatch matrix to impress an initial wafer onto a folded letter; one of the "Penny Black" stamps used for carriage within Liverpool, and another for forwarding to Queen's College, Cambridge in January 1841.

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In this Issue...

Collecting manuscript ephemera usually involves a focus on the content of a particular letter or document — or, perhaps, on the identity of the writer. This issue's theme is manuscript ephemera with a different slant.

With our lead article, "Sealing the Letter," **Art Groten** brings together the various ways in which communication by letter was safeguarded once envelopes became popular in England at mid 19th century — separating these into seals that were applied to an envelope and to innovative envelope designs. Evidence of use of some of these tiny bits of paper is fiendishly rare.

David Kaminski collects handwriting itself — particularly looking for evidence of unusual hands and how such penmanship was taught or evolved. He has isolated several styles of American handwriting 1850 to 1925, and here introduces us to three.

Tom Topol, one of our most far-flung members, provides us with two instances of passports that are open to further interpretation thanks to manuscript additions: the 1950s diplomatic passports of a young family could be studied for their political peregrinations; and the 1756 diplomatic passport issued to three Delaware Indians could be studied for the political implications of changes made in the draft retained by Governor Morris of Pennsylvania.

Chip Rowe provides an intriguing glimpse into what might be called an early 'zine - the *Playboy* magazine of the 1920s - thanks to the manuscript archives of publisher Egmont Arens at Syracuse University.

The major research article in this issue is by **Erika Piola**, based on her presentation at our 2017 ephemera conference. Her work is a fine example of research within a major named collection at an institution. Rickards medalist William H. Helfand not only placed his Popular Medicine Collection at the Library Company of Philadelphia but also supported a Visual Culture Program to encourage mining its ephemera at ever deeper levels.

—Diane DeBlois, editor

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Figure 4. Small box with “proof” impression of a matrix design.

Figure 6. Small medallion wafers came in boxes like this, often with the maker’s label on top.

Figure 5. The exquisitely detailed designs and characteristic Wedgwood blue identify the maker of the cameos on this gift card; at the top, a Maenad (follower of Dionysius); below, Cupid; a suggestive combination.

Figure 7. Rare use of a medallion wafer as a seal, Bath to London, 1840.

Figure 9. Isinglass wafers, like other quadrilateral forms, were made in sheets to be cut apart. Here a block with different styles of the letter “S.”

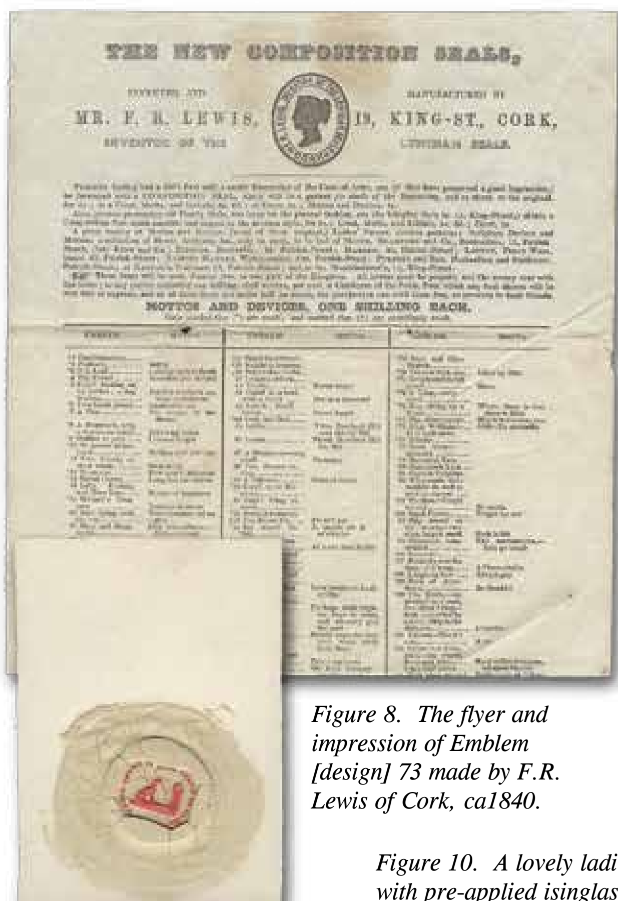

Figure 8. The flyer and impression of Emblem [design] 73 made by F.R. Lewis of Cork, ca1840.

Figure 10. A lovely ladies’ envelope with pre-applied isinglass wafer, ready for use. “All’s well/that/ends well”

Figure 11. Three examples of embossed wafers resembling wax: a sailing ship [Such is Life], a bouquet of flowers and a group of Masonic symbols.

were made of is unknown as only sample impressions of a single seal are recorded. The promotional flyer that accompanied the sample lists its design as #73 (figure 8).

The development of the wafer seal was the result of looking for an easier method than using heated wax and a matrix.[3] The simplest wafers were made of various thicknesses of a wheat, egg and gelatin preparation called isinglass. The least expensive were unadorned transparent disks made in sheets and die-cut into circles. Somewhat more expensive were those sold in sheets with printing upon

Figure 12. Charles Wilding's heavily embossed bust of Queen Victoria just after her 1837 Coronation, on a display card for pen nibs.

them, usually in gold or silver and quite hard to read (figure 9) Stationers might offer them pre-applied to fancy ladies' envelopes (figure 10).

More expensive were those made in an embossing press and usually colored; pure white ones are uncommon. They were opaque and closely simulated a true wax seal (figure 11). The embossing was made by a machine similar to the

Figure 13. Paper wafers: embossed "gold" foil with a balloon and 'Bon Voyage"; rosebuds (not embossed, hand-colored); and "Alls [sic] well" embossed on diamond-shaped wafer.

Figure 14. A full sheet of all different se-tenant motto wafers. Such sheets may be found intact but cut up with appropriate wafers being selected from the interior.

one used by Charles Wilding for his elaborate and highly collectible trade cards (figure 12). Wilding was also a security printer and claimed that his method of combining color and embossing made forgery more difficult.

Most other types of wafer seals were made of paper, in one or several colors. Some have a metallic surface, simulating foil (figure 13). All were meant to replace the wax seal and their use somewhat antedated the regular use of envelopes so that they may be found on folded letters as well as on envelopes - the earliest known use of a paper wafer is 1837. It is often not possible to date with precision when a particular type came into use, as there is considerable overlap.

Regardless of material used, wafers are found in many shapes: all manner of quadrilaterals, circular, oval or die-cut, usually imperforate, rarely serrated (usually for use on official documents), never perforated. The quadrilateral types were usually produced in sheets of se-tenant designs. Large multiples are rare (figure 14) and the use of more than one wafer on a letter is distinctly uncommon (figure 15). They were also available precut and sold in small envelopes or boxes (figure 16).

Those who could not afford the more expensive wafers could use plain paper "paste seals" which, like the gelatin type, were to be moistened on both sides and placed beneath the tip of the flap. Pressure was then applied with

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Figure 15. Two strips of paper wafers used to seal an envelope in 1846.

a paperweight to seal the letter. Sometimes a simple paste seal was used with another type of [ungummed] wafer that required an application of glue superimposed. The writing kit shown in figure 17 contains many of the wafer types I've described: plain, round isinglass, small white paste wafers, embossed wafers of various types and paper ones. It also contains a pen nib and a small piece of sealing wax. Stationers had a wide variety of wafers to choose from to offer their clients. Traveling salesmen carried sample books from which a selection could be made (figure 18).

How Wafers imparted their Message

As shown in some of the images above, a wafer message might be purely text, purely image or a combination of both. Most are generic, referring to or implying messages of love, friendship, home and longing, among other sentiments. The text is usually simple and the image, if there is one, is semiotically related to the text. The strips used on the cover in figure 15 show these two iterations; the second from the left including the image of a dog as a symbol of "Your Faithful Friend." In the absence of text, the image alone imparts the message (see the Masonic symbol in figure 11).

Less common were wafers depicting portraits (figure 19); actual places (figure 20) or events (figure 21). Special interest groups used wafers extensively: religious (figures 22 & 23), social (figures 24 & 25) and political (figures 26, 27, 28). There are, no doubt, other categories to be defined.

Figure 17. A writing kit with numerous types of wafers. The pen body is usually missing from these sets.

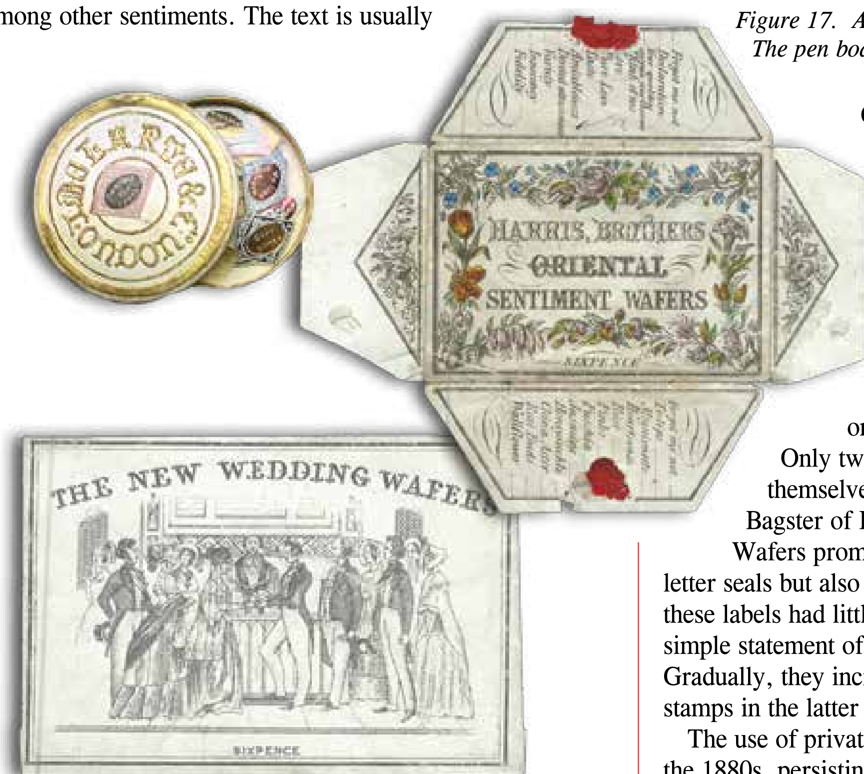

Figure 16. A small De La Rue box for motto wafers and two ornate wafer envelopes.

Commercial wafers appeared almost immediately after postal reform; the earliest known is July 1842 promoting Isaac Pitman's new Phonography method (figure 29). All Pitman wafer types have a message written in his shorthand - quite difficult to translate nowadays since the writing method has changed over the years. The best translation for the one shown is "Teaching will educate."

Only two printers are known to have identified themselves on Pitman wafers: John Gadsby and Bagster of London.

Wafers promoting products were used not only as letter seals but also as a purely advertising medium. Often, these labels had little more than a return address and a simple statement of the sender's vocation (figure 30). Gradually, they increased in size to be replaced by poster stamps in the latter part of the century (figure 31).

The use of private wafers ended for the most part in the 1880s, persisting primarily as an advertising medium or patriotic statement. But sealing of certain types of mail persisted, in particular accountable mail and official mail.

Figure 18. A wafer salesman's sample book from ca1840.

Figure 20. Topographical wafers are most often of British places: two different designs for Westminster Bridge (one isinglass, the other hand-colored paper [rare]); a third, also isinglass, is of Napoleon's Tomb on St. Helena.

Figure 19. Queen Victoria wafer on ornate hand-delivered ladies' envelope by Rock, ca1840.

Figure 21. "1698/No Surrender" refers to British support of the Iroquois during the French and Indian wars, used to seal a 1842 letter sent from Dublin to Waterford, Ireland.

Figure 22. "Religious doctrine taught by Swedenborg/Blessedness dwells in the tranquility of peace." (Used 1844.)

Figure 23. Many educated men could read Hebrew: "Trust in the Lord with all thy heart." (Used 1844.)

Figure 24. This is the only recorded anti-slavery wafer, dated 1852, well after emancipation in England. (None are recorded from the U.S. but they must exist.)

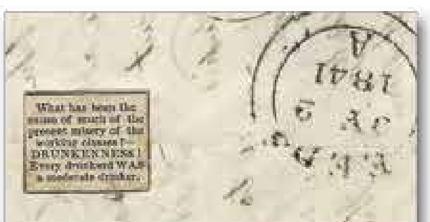

Figure 25. A rare 1841 Temperance wafer, used on a letter from London to Leeds.

Figure 26. The Anti-Corn Laws League sought repeal of 1815 laws that protected wealthy farmers from lowered prices after the Napoleonic Wars to the detriment of the small farmer. The League used wax and non-wax seals. This letter is addressed to George Wilson, Director of the League, 1843.

Figure 27. John Gadsby of Manchester produced a number of wafers for the League. This 1841 cover has 10, the most recorded used on an envelope.

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Figure 28. Three round Anti-Corn wafers are known. This 2 penny Mulready envelope was sent by Scottish Radical M.P. Joseph Hume, 1843.

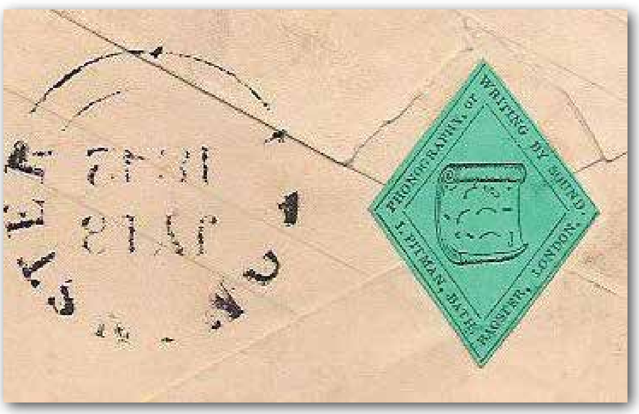

Figure 29. The earliest known advertising wafer: July 1, 1842 for Pitman phonography.

Figure 30. Examples of advertising wafers: 1847 "WB Agent for WN/[image of gun]/maker/ to H.R.H. Prince Albert"; a large label promoting travel from Edinburgh "To all Places in the United Kingdom" used to seal a local hand-carried envelope, ca1840; 1866 Fortnum & Mason on a letter from London; a simple typographical wafer for a bookseller in Dublin, used on a 1875 letter to New York.

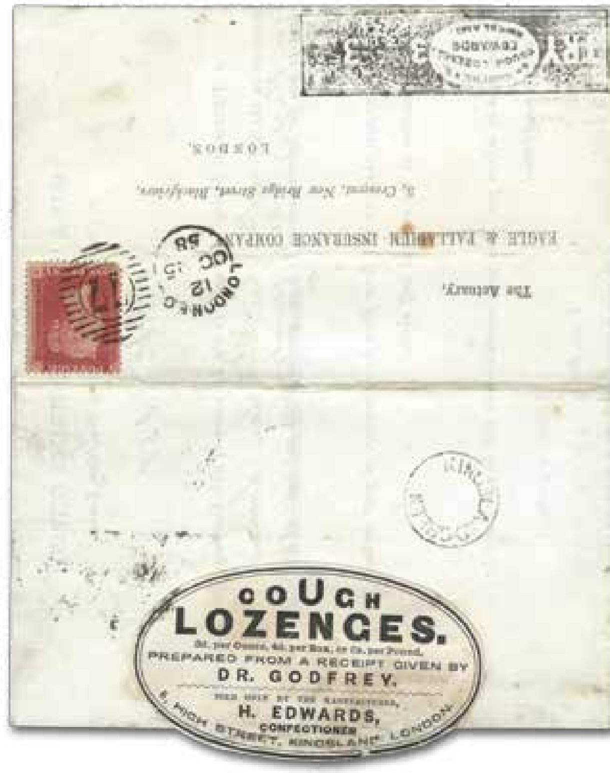

Figure 31. This 1858 large wafer for Dr. Godfrey's Lozenges presages the development of the poster stamp several decades later.

Development of the Secure Envelope

No sooner had the Penny Black postage stamp been issued on May 6, 1840 than a number of manufacturers began contending for production of a suitable envelope for replacing the customary folded letter.[4] The very first was Henry Tuck who registered No. 318 three weeks later on May 28. Two sizes of Tuck 318 exist, both having an imprint just beneath the flap inside the envelope and both being used concurrently (figures 32 & 33).

An advertisement in *the Railway Times* of November 21, 1840 for "Tuck's Hermetic envelopes" explained: "Postage Stamp Label is affixed to the envelope in such a manner as

Figure 32. Tuck's larger envelope Registry No. 318 (3" x 5") sealed with wax; an inset shows the imprint just beneath the flap.

Figure 33. Tuck's smaller envelope Registry No. 318 (3.75" x 2.5") has a different last line in the imprint: "Manufactured by MARC LA RIVIERE, Hackney."

Figure 34. A rare example of the Tuck envelope used as promoted: the postage stamp serving as a seal.

Figure 35. Ponsford's envelope Registry No. 342, used in 1846. "No. 342, June 23r 1840 Registered by William Ponsford, of Dalby Terrace, London. Manufactured by MARC LA RIVIERE, Hackney." Slightly larger than Tuck's (3.75" x 5.25") it has a different shape. A metallic wafer as well as spots of wax have been used to seal the flap.

Figure 36. Mitchell's envelop Registry No. 483 (2.75" x 4.6") used in 1847. "Improved Safety Envelope Mitchell & Son 39 Charing Cross. No. 483 Registered Novr. 1840."

Figure 38. Taylor's smaller (2.4" x 3.4") envelope Registry No. 588 - the use of the Royal arms in the embossed imprint presumably indicates they were formal suppliers to the Crown. "Regstd by E B Taylor, 3 Coventry St, London, 1st Feby 1841 No 588".

Figure 37. Hyde's complex envelope Registry No. 486 (2.6" x 4.2") has an unusual arrangement of flaps as well as holes in the tips of the back and wings that permit the wax to seep through, further securing the seal. "HYDE'S PERFECT ENVELOPE No. 486 ... Dec. 3, 1840 Registered by George Hyde, Stationer, 61, Fleet St., London".

Figure 39. Early use of a pre-gummed patent envelope (April 1846), with no registry number. "Weston, Patent, Rathbone Place, London".

Figure 40. Laschallas's envelope 507 - the earliest known registered pre-gummed patent envelope. "Laschallas Adhesive Registered July 31, 1845, No. 507".

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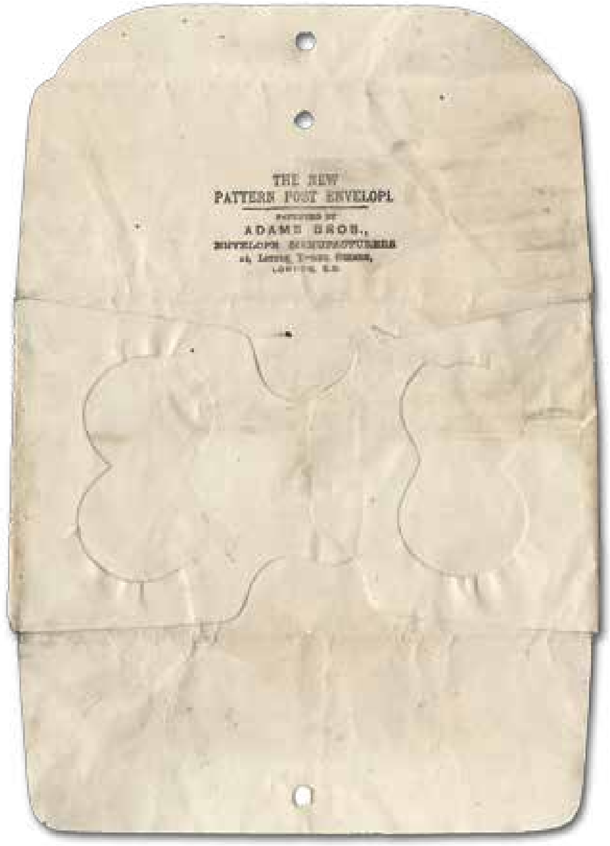


Figure 41. Adams very complex patent envelope with a large future 8 cutout in the wing flaps and holes in the upper and lower flaps (there is no indication on this example used in 1871 how these holes were to be used). "THE NEW PATTERN POST ENVELOPE Patented by ADAMS BROS., Envelope Manufacturers 14 Little Tower Street, London, E.C."

to serve at once to seal and frank the letter. Separate Waxing or Wafering rendered unnecessary." Examples of the use of the stamp are exceedingly rare and are known with both the Penny Black (figure 34, 1841) and the Penny Red.

A number of other makers soon followed, each with an assigned registry number. The position of their imprints varied; some were printed, others embossed. All these early patent envelopes had no gum and were sealed by wax, wafer or stamp (gummed envelopes didn't appear until

Figure 42. Waterlow & Sons advertised their patent envelopes on the inside of the flap, here used in 1850.

Figure 43. The embossed flap of the style of envelope that Waterlow & Sons demonstrated at the Great Exhibition of 1851.

1845). The examples in figures 35 to 41 are arranged in registry order, whatever year they were used.

In 1850, Waterlow & Sons, the famous stationer and printer, maker of many British stamps, issued an envelope with extensive advertising text on the inside of the flap, to promote their products including "Improved Adhesive Envelopes" (figure 42).

At the Great Exhibition of 1851, Waterlow demonstrated a machine capable of making 2000 pre-gummed envelopes an hour. Around the flap (figure 43) reads an embossed statement: "Waterlow & Sons Manufacturing Stationer 65 to 68 London Wall, London/Manufactured by Steam Machinery at the Crystal Palace Hyde Park." At the same Exhibition, De la Rue & Co. demonstrated a machine that could produce 3600 envelopes per hour, thus winning the prize.

Waterlow made a number of other patent envelopes in the period after the Exhibition. One used in 1864 (figure 44) was called "The Self Sealing Envelope Paper" with an embossing to that effect on the sheet. Another, used in 1873, (figure 45) had, under the flap, "The 'Despatch' Envelope/Waterlow & Sons, London, Sole Manufacturers."

One type of patent envelope appeared as a direct consequence of Government's tampering with the mail. Parliament had inn the past permitted mail in certain cases to be opened for inspection, usually in time of war. In 1844, Sir James Graham issued an order from the Home Office that letters to and from Giuseppe Mazzini, an Italian dissident resident in London, were to be opened.

Figure 44. An example of Waterlow's "Self Sealing Envelope Paper" used in 1864.

Figure 45. Embossing under the flap of another style of Waterlow envelope, used in 1873.

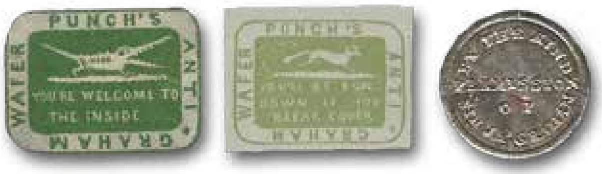


Figure 46. (above) Three labels produced in response to the Mazzini mail tampering incident of 1844: different color printings of one published by Punch magazine, and a small foil "By the kind permission of Sir Jas. Graham."

The intelligence gained was passed to the Austrians who squelched a planned invasion. When word got out, there was an outcry among the British. A number of labels were produced in response, particularly a sheet of 16 by *Punch* magazine (figure 46).

In 1847 Brown's Patent riveted envelopes were produced to prevent such mail tampering. The earliest had "Brown's Patent" with no markings on the rivet hub itself (figure 47). The simplest was made of brass with "Patent" on the hub, no surround and no mention of Brown (figure 48). A third type had "Patent" on both the surround and the hub (figure 49). By 1848, various businesses understood the value of placing their firms' name and trade on the surrounds (figure 50). It is unclear whether Brown remained the sole patentee and felt no need to include his name on these envelopes.[5]

Figure 47. (left) The first style of Brown's Patent riveted envelope with no markings on the rivet hub itself, used March 1847.

Figure 48. (below) Another style of envelope with patent on the rivet hub but no mention of Brown, used June 1848.

Figure 49. (left) A third style had "Patent" on both the surround and the rivet hub (unused).

Figure 50: (below)Patent rivet envelopes embossed for "J. & C. Simonds, Reading Bank" used April 1850; and "Cox's Hotel Jermyn Street" used May 1859.

Endnotes

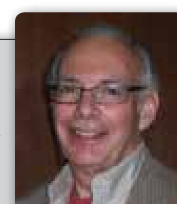
[1] Given the importance of sealing the letter to insure privacy, there is surprisingly little information on how that privacy was maintained. There is but a single book dedicated to this topic, *Adhesive Wafer Seals* by Michael Champness and David Trapnell (1996). Passing note of them is made in Michael Finlay's *Western Writing Implements* (1990). My British colleagues know of no other significant references.

[2] Wax was originally made of ⅔ beeswax and ⅓ resin with additional coloring or not. Much of the so-called "wax" after the mid-16th century was in reality a mixture of shellac and powdered vermilion. But we use the term "wax" nonetheless.

[3] For other than true wax seals, I use the terms "wafer," "wafer seal" and "seal" more or less interchangeably; "seal" is more commonly used in the U.S.; in Britain a "seal" referred, formally, to that made by a matrix in wax.

[4] No reference exists for the various patent envelopes produced in the 1840s so my description depends solely on what I have been able to find. There are, assuredly, more types.

[5] This design of envelope was used in the U.S. with a surround of an American firm.



Arthur H. Groten, a past president of the Ephemera Society of America, has for decades enthusiastically promoted the collecting of ephemera within the stamp collecting world. He coined the term "paraphilately" for a long-running series of published columns focused on material such as envelope seals. This article is based on an award-winning exhibit (viewed earlier this year at our annual conference and fair) that was shown by invitation to the Royal Philatelic Society in London. Dr. Groten is in the American Philatelic Society's Writers Hall of Fame, and received that Society's prestigious Luff Award for Excellence in Research.

What Does Not Kill You Makes You Stronger: *The William H. Helfand Popular Medicine Collection at the Library Company of Philadelphia*

By Erika Piola

In 1905, journalist Samuel Hopkins Adams wrote nearly a dozen revealing investigative articles about the fraudulent patent medicine industry for *Collier's Magazine*.[1] Titled "The Great American Fraud," he started the series with the rather pejorative, but straightforward opinion that America was "gullible" to patent medicine purveyors, the "skilfulest [sic] of the advertising bunco men." [2] And yet their advertising, shaped by advances in printing technologies, evolving medical practices, and strengthening drug regulations over the 19th century, is also a lens on the innovative, if be it pernicious, modern marketing culture developed by them.[3] It is a culture that continues to influence public perceptions today. Ranging beyond the periodical advertisements particularly chastised by Adams and including packaging labels to trade cards to billheads targeted at persons of all ages, this commercial ephemera embodies the beautiful, beguiling, comical, and disturbing visual and textual rhetoric informing our 21st-century 'Post-Truth' era.

The Library Company of Philadelphia holds a significant collection of this material through the William H. Helfand Popular Medicine Collection. The Helfand Collection is comprised of over 13,000 pieces of ephemera dating from the 18th through 20th centuries, including trade cards, advertisements, promotional pamphlets, letter and billheads, calendars, circulars, wrappers, and bags. Much of the material falls under the aegis of our Visual Culture Program started in 2008 with the support of former Library trustee William H. Helfand.[4] The Program challenges us to study historical graphics as primary research materials and to examine the social construction of the visual world and the visual construction of the social world. Popular medicine ephemera is a rich vehicle to further explore this relationship and the role that innovation plays in a consumer market in which it is understood "buyer beware."

As critiqued then and known now, popular medicines often contained addictive and fatal ingredients, like the acetanilide in the popular pain killer Antekamnia, in addition to natural ones, such as herbs, minerals, and botanicals. Their purveyors typically exhorted these "effective" natural and narcotic ingredients in their advertisements. When promoted, strategically, in conjunction with an illustration like Antekamnia's mascot "Funny Bones" (figure 1), or a vignette, or pictorial detail on a piece of ephemera, this combination of visual and textual rhetoric could compel a purchase; allegiance to a product; or communicate helpful or misguided instructions for use.

This preponderance of more diminutive graphics more often than not provided an impact equal to the large posters

Figure 1. 'Tis the Genuine *(St. Louis, Mo.: The Antikamnia Chemical Company, ca1900). Chromolithograph advertisement depicting the Antikamnia mascot "Funny Bones." Printer, pharmacist, and doctor Louis Crucius (d.1898) created the skull- headed figure while a medical student in the late 1880s.*

also utilized by the industry. Images read as superseding words to promote, persuade, and dominate rhetoric. This essay examines this imagery often taken for granted due to its nature as a medium in a visual purgatory. Not fine art, and on the cusp of popular art, this material embodies the irony of a disposable that is meant to be memorable. The Helfand Popular Medicine Collection contains numerous examples of this dimensionally less dynamic, but still engaging imagery.

Product labels comprised some of the earliest illustrated commercial ephemera employed by businesses. During the 19th century, popular medicine dealers capitalized on the marketing potential of these miniature advertisements. These "pharmaceutical" purveyors were some of the first

Figure 2. Dr. Larzetti's Juno Cordial or Procreative Elixir *(New York: Judson & Co., 1844. Uncut engraved label.*

Victorian-era businesses to use signed, decorative labels displaying marks of authenticity, such as the signature of their manufacturer.[5] The Helfand Collection contains a number of mid-19th-century labels that document the trade's savvy in co-opting imagery typically associated with respectability and used in antebellum commercial ephemera, like bank notes, certificates, and bonds. The illustrations elevated daily commercial transactions and aided in the human commonality of "fantasy as an integral part of everyday life."[6] Fantasies represented by the graphics on the label on the bottle that promised or suggested the ideal state of wellbeing.

The vignette-size graphics comprised stock imagery in the thousands, possibly tens of thousands. Artists, engravers, and printers intra-circulated and interchangeably used the images between different genres of printed matter. Obsequious marketing devices, the vignettes, were strategically placed on the printed matter to successively guide and inform the viewer. As noted by engraver William Humphrys, an artist for such ephemera of this period, "something needs to be left to the imagination of the viewer," an imagination affected by the media, the layout, and practical purpose of the article.[7] The prints juxtaposed realistic, historical, and allegorical vignettes that depicted work and genre scenes, portraits, and views. The graphics often incorporated images of the female form, children, and animals and many times suggested motion. Labels for Comstock & Brother, the firm originally established circa 1833 by patriarch Ellis Comstock, epitomize this pattern through a montage of advertising text, vignettes, and pictorial details.[8]

While the nude classical and mythological figures channeled works of fine art and their appreciation denoted a sophisticated viewer and thus consumer, the folksy, sometimes absurdist scenarios reminiscent of a story book illustration fostered personal connections. Within this visual milieu, the Victorian generation mentally digested micro images like the ones on Comstock's Dr. Larzetti's Juno Cordial or Procreative Elixir label. (Figure2)

The "certain remedy in all cases of impotency, barrenness, … painful menstruation … and all diseases arising from debilitation of the system where an impulse or a restorative is required" contained illustrations of allegorical images of female strength and humanity, as well as a wholesome peasant girl and her "kid." These symbols all represented procreation when left to the imagination.

Comstock's Carlton's Liniment label contains similar genres of allegorical and realistic imagery (figure 3). Side border details of medicine bottles marked "New York" document the place of origin of the liniment. A floating cherub holding a star guides an allegorical female figure who is driving a horse-drawn chariot in the right direction (to be cured). And there is a male Native American figure brandishing a bow representing man harnessing nature. The vignettes symbolize proprietariness, resilience, and natural remedies. Ideals wanted in a medicine that cures the discomfort of the sore bottom or dysfunctional muscles one needed to be a productive member of society.

Figure 3. Carlton's Liniment. A Certain Remedy for the Piles &c. &c… None Genuine Without the Facsimile Signature of the Proprietors. Comstock & Brother, New York *(New York: Comstock & Brother, 1851). Uncut engraved label.*

continued from page 13

Figure 4. Just Found His Mail Pouch. Bloch Bros. Anti-Nervous/Dyspeptic Tobacco *(Wheeling, W. Va.?: Bloch Bros. Tobacco Company, ca. 1890). Chromolithographed trade card.*

The illustrations reflected the popular medicine dealer's prescribed message that their medicine would restore impulses or nonfunctioning muscles while courting new patrons with accessible miniature art. The imagery also invited the consumer to decipher that dealer's unique narrative for the allegorical views through a mediated reading of the interplay of the sets of images and the text. In the case of the popular medicine trade, their success relied on the proactive, some may say gullible consumer, whose visual investment and trust in the label was required. A trust that could be bolstered by hallmarks of the Comstock products — copyright statements and signatures of authenticity. A gesture that could be called somewhat ironic for the Comstock firm. By the time of the labels described, Comstock and Brother were in the middle of what would become a two-decade period where the ever-changing members of the firm and corollary firms sued, countersued, and filed injunctions for control of the rights and revenues of Comstock medicines.

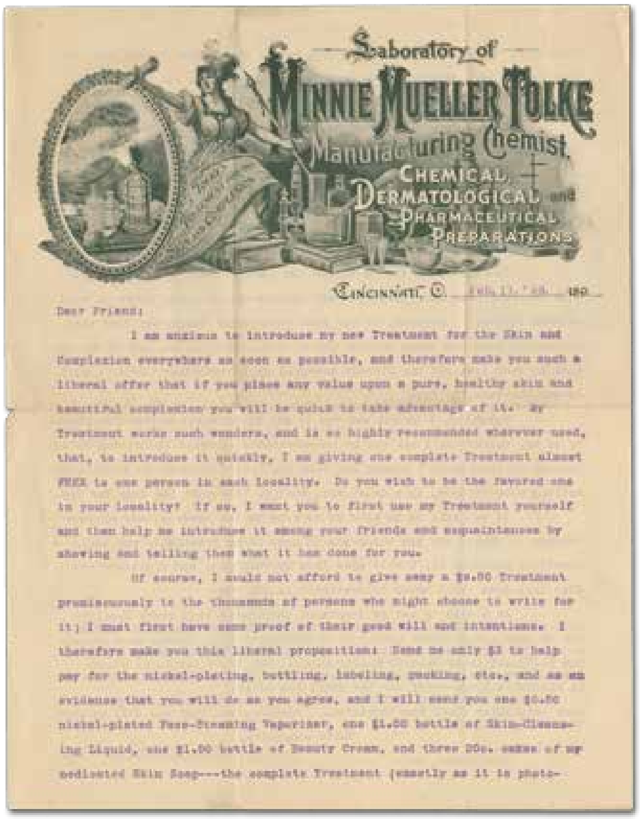
Oppositely, the Comstock firm, known as W. H. Comstock & Co. by the late 1860s, also employed perceived realism and transparency as marketing ploys. Circa 1880 trade cards in the Helfand Collection show the purported pristine and efficient interior of the Comstock manufactory in the process of making Comstock's Dead Shot Pellet for Worms, a dewormer for children that was most likely predominantly sugar.

These trade cards comprise just a few of the over 7,000 in the Helfand Collection representing Victorian-era popular medicine dealers, including pharmacists. This medium had become the ideal vehicle for later 19th-century advertising. The palm-sized print started as a novel method of advertisement around the 1860s in tandem with the perfecting of chromolithography in the United States. Mass production of eye-catching color printed promotions (with print runs up to 100,000s) proved a boon for increased profits for the lithographic printing trade and for all manner of business owners. The Helfand trade cards comprised of stock and customized illustrations concisely document our cultural past with patent medicines and a historical trajectory of the revolutionary nature of the medium. One can perceive this ephemera as an innovative, pre-digital parallel of contemporary inventive digital visual culture, particularly with respect to the concept of motion infusing the content, as well as the artifact itself.

"Advertising with legs," a marketing campaign imperative of the late 19th-century print advertising agencies, had started a few decades earlier with the trade card. As with labels, trade cards often included illustrations of children, animals, the female form, as well as genre and fantastical scenes.[9] This advertising staple of the Gilded Age epitomizes the multiple connotations of the "legs" marketing objective during a period associated with indiscriminate consumerism.

Trade cards as did much small scale imagery used full-length portrayals of people and animals, legs and all, to create a sense of motion. People literally transported the cards in one's hand, pocket, or bag. And the genre was an advertising fad, and by consequence a promotion that had "legs" in consumer culture. Thousands of designs were collected and saved in the scrapbooks of women, children, and occasionally men. Trade cards even had a subgenre of metamorphic versions that literally moved providing a tactile, interactive visual experience controlled by its handler. A lot of the motifs and themes are comfortingly

Figure 5. Frederick Stearns & Co. Manufacturing Pharmacists, Detroit, Mich., U.S.A. *(Detroit, ca1890). Photomechanically printed billhead.*


Laboratory of
MINNIE MUELLER TOLKE
Manufacturing Chemist,
CHEMICAL, DERMATOLOGICAL and PHARMACEUTICAL PREPARATIONS
Cincinnati, O. 189

Dear Friend:

I am anxious to introduce my new Treatment for the Skin and Complexion everywhere as soon as possible, and therefore make you such a liberal offer that if you place any value upon a pure, healthy skin and beautiful complexion you will be quick to take advantage of it. My Treatment works such wonders, and is so highly recommended wherever used, that, to introduce it quickly, I am giving one complete Treatment almost FREE to one person in each locality. Do you wish to be the favored one in your locality? If so, I want you to first use my Treatment yourself and then help me introduce it among your friends and acquaintances by showing and telling them what it has done for you.

Of course, I could not afford to give away a $2.00 Treatment promiscuously to the thousands of persons who might choose to write for it; I must first have some proof of their good will and intentions. I therefore make you this liberal proposition: Send me only $1 to help pay for the nickel-plating, bottling, labeling, packing, etc., and as an evidence that you will do as you agree, and I will send you one $0.50 nickel-plated Face-Steaming Vaporizer, one $1.00 bottle of Skin-Cleansing Liquid, one $1.00 bottle of Beauty Cream, and three 25c. cakes of my medicated Skin Soap---the complete Treatment (exactly as it is photo-

Figure 6. Laboratory of Minnie Mueller Tolke, Manufacturing chemist. Chemical, Dermatological and Pharmaceutical Preparations. Cincinnati, O. *(Cincinnati, ca. 1890). Halftone letterhead.*

and jarringly familiar. Traits more conspicuously relayed by the trade cards and made more resonant by the printed color than the black and white vignettes of the labels despite the similar themes.

As they still are today, babies constituted popular marketing devices during the 19th century. Although an inappropriate promotional connect today, the Bloch Brothers Tobacco Company used a baby in a circa 1890 trade card advertising their medicinal cigarettes (Figure 4). The promotion for their West Virginia Mail Pouch Tobacco epitomizes all the thematic elements — baby, motion, realism, illusion — still employed today in mass media advertising online, and in general that are uncannily recognizable. There is the cute, pudgy baby. A realistic portrayal most certainly produced through photography. A sense of motion invoked from his smile, his recoiled foot, and his clutching hands. And a juvenile double entendre that relies on the text in dialogue with the image that cannot be coincidental. It is implausible that the creators of "Just Found his Mail Pouch" did not realize the cheeky, double entendre portrayed with the position of the baby's hand. An implication made both innocent, yet adult in that the image is a facsimile of a photograph of a real baby. Due to the fortuitous placement of his hand in the right place at the right time when photographed, the banal, referential humor of the imagery proves memorable and a little reminiscent of the dancing baby Gif at the forefront of digital vignettes. As suggested by art historian Michael Leja, the trade card imagery can be described as injected by a photo-vitamin that has super-fortified it to be accepted as a truthful fiction, with the print, not the photograph as the primary medium.[10] The graphic enacting as much of a truthful fiction as the medicinal value of cigarettes.

Another aspect of a popular medicine dealer's "advertising with legs" relied on letter and billheads. They provided the trade a venue to simultaneously promote their facilities and products. Views, one could say portraits, of their storefronts or factories usually illustrated their stationery which was often used to solicit postmasters and other potential distributors of their products. Striking for the embellishments and pictorial details, the imagery alludes to the success of the firms through working smoke stacks and/or street and pedestrian traffic. The influence of the Art Noveau movement during the later 19th century to aestheticize the environment had induced a mission within the burgeoning graphic design industry to create something unique and beautiful, no matter if a transient printed work. Striking typographical elements, like the shadow effect of the Gaslight Style, and an engaging illustration, especially by American printers at the forefront of typographical design, could make your letter stand out from the rest and feel new in the 1880s and 1890s (Figure 5).[11] But savvy does not always mean discerning.

The term gaslight used to describe the style of typography could also be used to describe the manipulative effect the

Figure 7. Dr. Scotts advertisement for electrical devices *(New York, ca1889). Chromolithograph.*

continued on page 16

continued from page 15

Figure 8. "The Lady of the Lake," from The Judge*, ca.1883. Chromolithograph.*

images had on the consumers of the imagery and product. Factories are portrayed as pristine shining bastions of productivity — as evident from the always billowing smoke stacks — attracting, as well as promoting the modern technologies and mass transits of city life portrayed. What is not shown are the less than optimal work conditions inside the factories spurring the rise of labor unions, the escalating pollution levels, and in the case of the medicinal industry, the dubious ingredients of the medicines manufactured that were yet to be regulated by the federal government.

Some popular medicine letterheads did not include a picture of the exterior of a manufactory and yet still provided a portrait of the firm. An elegantly designed 1898 letterhead, also including elements of Gaslight-Style typography, promoted Minnie Mueller Tolke (Figure 6). In a certainly intentionally gendered portrayal, the letterhead does not show an image of her factory. Instead pharmaceutical equipment; an allegorical figure reminiscent of Minerva, the goddess of wisdom; and a female customer using her products is depicted. The striking visuals smartly evoke conjointly strength, female industriousness, and sensual femininity. Although not an exterior, it does still show Tolke's laboratory through the interior, as represented by her equipment, of her manufactory. The arrangement of the first line of text also ingeniously serves as a title captioning the image of the laboratory. Whether Tolke really existed has yet to be confirmed. A Minnie Mueller Tolke did place ads soliciting female agents in local newspapers. Tolke used a similar incentive to her letterhead solicitation in her newspaper ads. She offered a gift, including a vaporizer (depicted on her commercial stationery), if you chose to promote her merchandise.

From gaslight in typography, let's turn to electricity. Electric currents, charges, and magnetism seemed patent made for the patent medicine trade. As espoused by the turn-of the-20th century Burlington, Kansas Midwest Electric Appliance Co. in their complimentary lecture on electricity, "Electricity in small doses gives new ideas and brain power."[12] The innovation of electricity fostered innovation! The Helfand Collection contains a number of these later 19th- and early 20th-century pamphlets and other promotions about the medicinal uses of electricity. Not unexpectedly, the promotions were published by firms that typically had electric in their name. Promoted as both revolutionary and safe, as well as often battery powered, electric belts, pads, and other appliances charged and energized the area to which the devices were applied. However, only if the directions were followed and cost-saving patience prevailed. As noted by the Brooklyn Electric Pad Manufacturing Company, "Do not give it up … Try to be almost as patient with it as you would be with a doctor and midicines[sic], both of which cost you its price many times over. Give it a fair trial." [13]

In the broadest terms, electricity provided the vitality of life. The harnessed charges strengthened, enlarged, or cured the problem area for ailments ranging from headaches to hernias to impotency and the oft-promoted "diseases popular to women." Some, like English-born New York manufacturer George A. Scott, even advertised electric (in truer terms magnetized) toothbrushes, corsets, hair curlers, and hairbrushes. The "electric" devices cured bad teeth, spinal complaints, headaches, and baldness, respectively. A particularly engaging trade card focuses on a young woman wearing Scott's electric corset and holding his hairbrush (Figure 7). The visual exudes the sense that the woman has been remade by the apparatuses. Her long, blonde hair is luxurious and wavy; her strong teeth allow her to clamp down on the strands of tall grass that she serendipitously holds; and her curvaceous figure and straight posture are the pictures of vitality.

Where there was an electrified product, there typically was a parallel one that was not. Plaster pads are such a case. The Helfand Collection contains dozens of examples of the pads themselves as well as their complementary advertisements. This segment of the collection documents cures, including the Parr English Pad, absorbed through the skin naturally.

Advertising for the Parr English Pad represents the rhetorical flip side of the visual and textual language that promotes "cure the disease you have" to that of "if you get it, this will cure it." Through similar imagery mocking the literal and figurative swampy state of Central Park used mercilessly by New York satiric periodicals of the era, like the *Judge*, some Parr marketing played on Victorian society's fears of the threat of waterborne illnesses (Figure 8). The Pittsburgh company issued an advertising print circa 1885 with an ominous scene that includes the remedy embodied as a homely female figure, rather than the beautiful maiden used in other of the firm's promotions (Figure 9). She is as physically disconcerting as the witchlike representation of the disease she thwarts, which is the likely not-so-ironic point. She may not be a pretty cure, but she will get the job done. Even more eerie is a female corpse who almost disappears into the muddy foreground. Sometimes scaring the consumer was the preferred method to a sale. Although not the most visually pleasing ad, it still resonates with the viewer. The image powerfully documents 19th-century fears and perceptions of swamps as dens of disease. It is timeless in its ability to make one squeamish as it provides a truly graphic history of the visual role of illness in the development of patent medicine advertising.

The William H. Helfand Popular Medicine Collection is a goldmine of the visual and marketing rhetoric of the patent medicine trade during the 19th century. Innovative in concept, design, and targeted marketing, this article sought to provide a useful filter to the ephemera produced by the advertising bunco men of the patent medicine trade. Their labels, trade cards, letterheads, and advertising prints remain eternally engaging to the visual consumer of today as they did for the medicinal consumer of yesteryear.

Endnotes

[1] Popular medicine and patent medicine will be used interchangeably to identify the trade and its purveyors of medicines made with unregulated and/ or undisclosed ingredients and which did not require a prescription.

[2] Samuel Hopkins Adams, "The Great American Fraud," *Colliers Weekly* (October 7, 1905): 14.

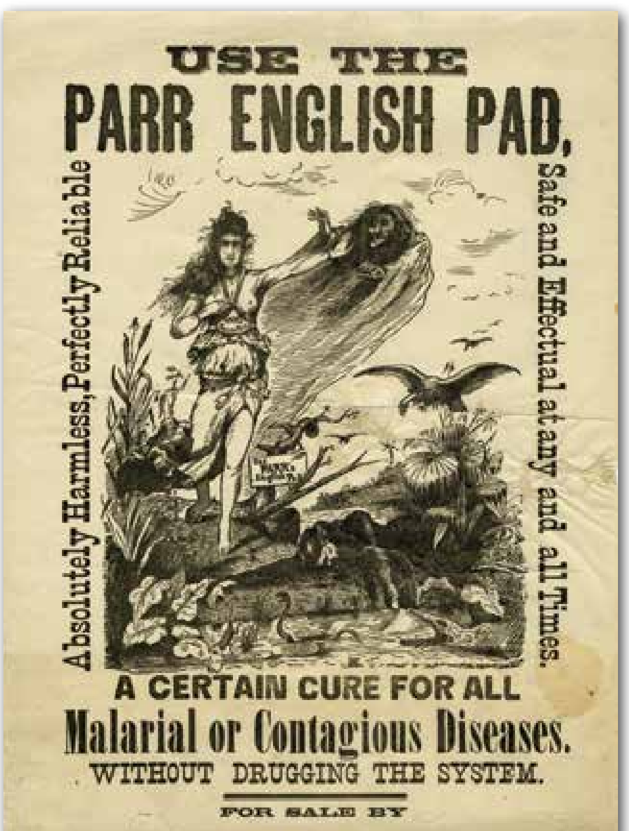


Figure 9. Use the English Parr Pad, A Certain Cure for All Malarial Contagious Diseases *(Pittsburgh?, ca1885). Relief print.*

[3] The American Medical Association (AMA) and its code of ethics were established 1846-1847. The Association initially formed mainly as a means to limit the market competition between orthodox doctors and homeopathic and irregular doctors. Despite the establishment of the AMA, 19th-century practicing physicians were not mandated to hold a medical license. Most states did not have licensing laws until the 1920s. The Pure Food and Drug Act was signed into law in June 1906. The regulatory statute forbade the manufacture, sale, or transportation of poisonous patent medicines. See John Duffy*, From Humors to Medical Science: A History of American Medicine* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), particularly pages 85-86 and Chapter 9 and 14.

[4] For further information about the Visual Culture Program, visit http://librarycompany.org/academic-programs/vcp/.

[5] The earliest surviving labels date to the 16th century and identified different kinds of paper and fabric. By the early 19th century, in addition to medicine dealers, beer, blacking, perfume, needles, and nibs makers utilized labels on their products. Maurice Rickards, *The Encyclopedia of Ephemera,* ed. Michael Twyman (New York: Routledge, 2000), 189.

[6] Paul Duncum, "Theorising Everyday Aesthetic Experience with Contemporary Visual Culture," *Visual Arts Research* 28 (2002): 4-15.

[7] William Humphrys to James Barton Longacre, n.d. [after 1833], James Barton Longacre Manuscript Collection, Box 1, Folder 23. Library Company of Philadelphia.

[8] For a history of the firm, see Robert B. Shaw, *History of the Comstock Patent Medicine Business and Dr. Morse's Indian Root Pills* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1972).

[9] See Donald R. Holland, "Volney B. Palmer: The Nation's First Advertising Agency Man," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History & Biography* 98 (July 1974): 353-381.

[10] Michale Leja, "Fortified Images for the Masses," *Art Journal* 70 (2011): 66.

[11] See David Jury*, Graphic Design Before Graphic Designers: The Printer as Designer and Craftsman 1700-1914* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2012), chap. 5 and Robert Biggert, "Architectural Vignettes on Commercial Stationery," *Ephemera Journal* 8 (1998): 24-42.

[12] *A Lecture on Electricity. Compliments of the Electric Appliance Co. Burlington, Kas.* (Burlington, Kas: Electric Appliance Co, ca.1910), 5.

[13] *The Electric Medicated Chest Pad or Lung Invigorator. For the Cure of Incipient Consumption, Pains in Chest, Stubborn Coughs, Asthma, Bronchitis, and Catarrh* (Brooklyn, N.Y.: Electric Pad Manufacturing Co., ca.1890), 3.

Erika Piola, is Associate Curator of Prints and Photographs and Co-Director of the Visual Culture Program at the Library Company of Philadelphia. She is editor and contributor to *Philadelphia on Stone: Commercial Lithography in Philadelphia*, 1828-1878 (2012). Ms. Piola has also presented and published work on American visual culture, 19th-century ephemera, and the antebellum Philadelphia print market.

American Handwriting 1850–1925:
Three Lesser Known Styles

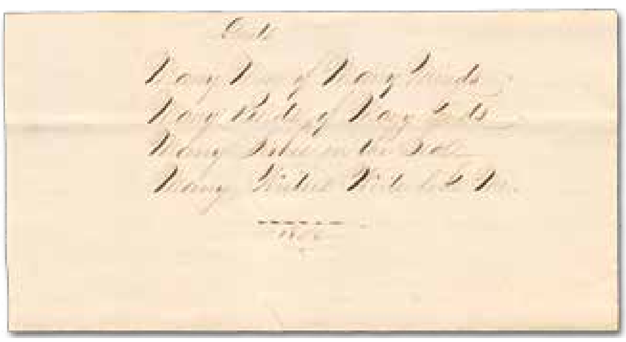
By David Kaminski

Handwriting is familiar to us all, yet elusive. One might assume that the history of American handwriting has been fully explored and understood. Yet there are gaps, missing details and missing information. In this empirical study, I seek out patterns or multiple instances of unusual styles or categories, sort them, usually in date order, and then try to understand why these kinds of writing were being used, and in what way.

In the categories below are samples culled from the tens of thousands of manuscript ephemera examined in person and in online galleries. I wish to share my research and to encourage others to look at written ephemera in a new way.

1850 to 1925 roughly spans an era often referred to as the golden age of penmanship. Because the famous penmen of this era have been so heavily studied, they are useful as a point of reference to see how different their style is from what we will look at later.

For example, here is handwriting from the most influential penman of the era, Platt Roger Spencer, using his Spencerian style:

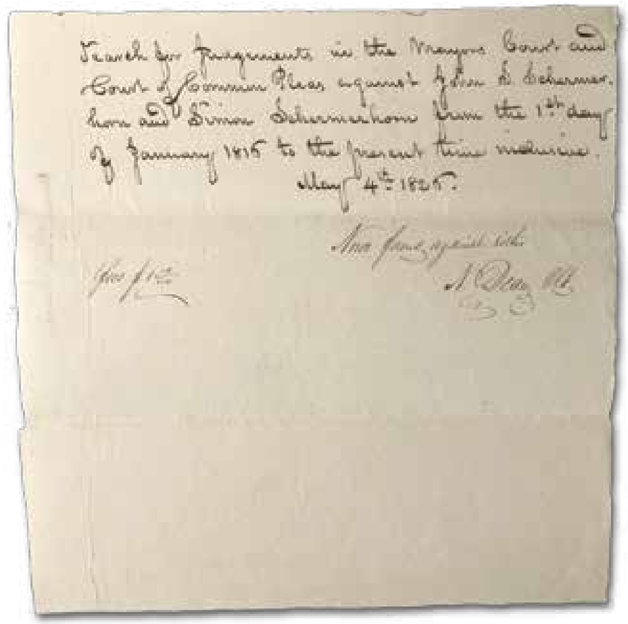


By contrast, what follows are categories that fall outside of the handwriting taught by the great penmen: examples written by ordinary people as well as examples that help define a profession, a time period, or that are in some way contrary to the common understanding of "normal" handwriting.

Back Hand Writing / Leftward Sloping Writing

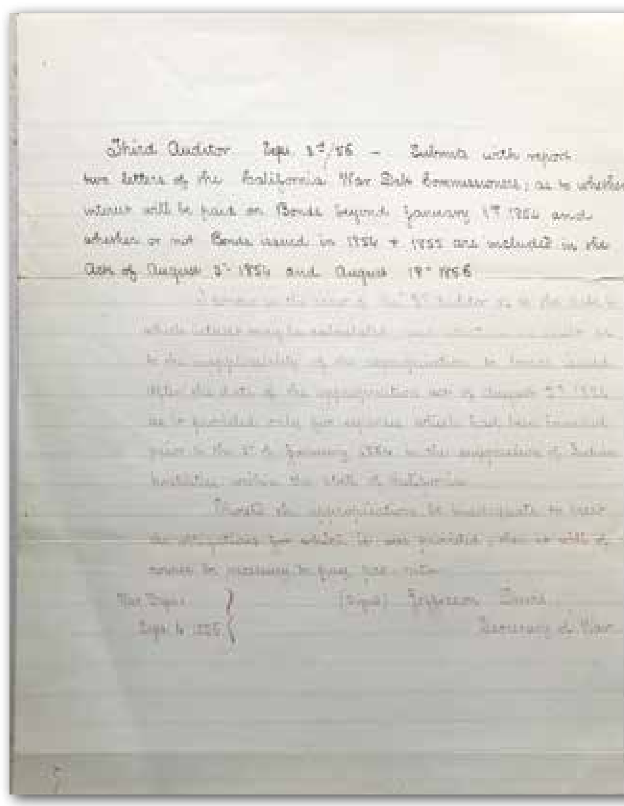
I think I can say with certainty that most collectors today were taught in school to use a rightward slope in their writing. But, for more than a century, writing with a leftward slope, or back handed, was a style used by school children, penmen, and sign painters, usually to draw attention to specific words, or for emphasis. Sometimes, it was also a choice to write in this angle, often with a unique personal style.

Back hand can be seen regularly in cashiers' and clerks' writing, the writing of lawyers and judges, and legal



Search for Judgements in the Mayors Court and Court of Common Pleas against Jon L Schermerhorn and Sam Schermerhorn from the 1st day of January 1815 to the present time inclusive. May 4th 1825.

Figure 1. "Search for Judgements," Schermerhorn, May 4, 1825 (author's collection).



Third Auditor Sept. 2d/56 – Submits with report two letters of the California War Debt Commissioners; as to whether interest will be paid on Bonds beyond January 1st 1854 and whether or not Bonds issued in 1854 + 1855 are included in the Acts of August 5th 1854 and August 18th 1856

Figure 2. War Department, September 4, 1856 (author's collection).

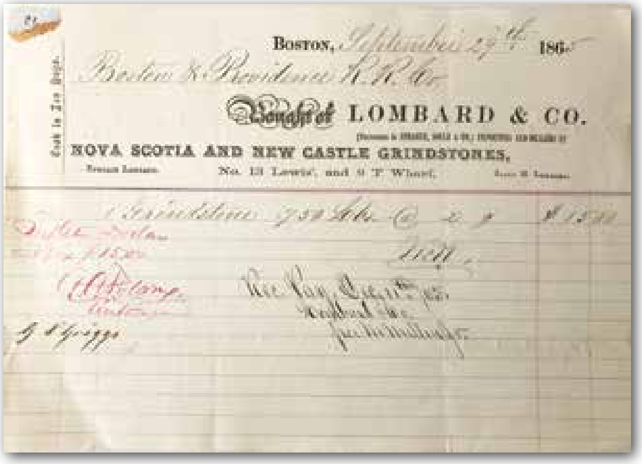


Figure 3. Lombard & Co., receipt, September 29, 1865 (author's collection).

writing. I am still discovering and sorting samples - here are a few.

The early (1825) example in figure 1 shows the broad date range of back hand in legal writing.

The clerk's writing in the War Department of 1856 (figure 2) is interesting because of its rounded letters, use of colored ink, and very consistent style and slant. While I have not made any study of the War Department clerk writing, I have seen nearly exactly the same writing used in 1876. This suggests a great effort to create and maintain a style.

Figure 4. Whitehouse, Alfred D., "Left handed writing sample by Alfred D. Whitehouse," The Empty Sleeve, Life and Limb, U.S. National Library of Medicine, National Institute of Health, Library of Congress, 1866.

Regarding the 1865 Boston receipt in figure 3, I believe that the back hand writing has meaning as part of the accounting process. Just as using colored ink is a signifier, so too is the back hand an official reckoning of the payment received.

Back hand was also an accepted angle of writing for left handed people or Civil War soldiers who lost their dominant right arm and who were forced to write with their left hands. Figure 4 showcases the writing of Civil War soldier Alfred D. Whitehouse.

Examples of back hand writing printed in copybooks (excluding brush stroke and other lettering styles) are somewhat rare to see. It is notable that even the Spencer Bros. included it in the 1894 publication, figure 5.

Figure 5. Spencer, Platt Rogers, et al., Spencerian System of Penmanship, Common School Course, Book 1, Revised Ed., *New York: Ivison, Brakeman & Co., 1888, 1894.*

One can also find examples of staggering variety and illegibility, such as the postcard in figure 6, ca1911.

Although these samples range across many years, my own research has not led me to any back hand study in widely used penmanship books. The earliest example I can find in which the author indicates that a person should use back hand is in Charles William Bazeley's 1821 second edition of *Elements of penmanship: simplified and illustrated.* In the book, he directs the learner to use it for "cards of compliment, invitations, and exhibitions of fanciful and ornamental penmanship," and he offers no sample, except for leftward slanting letterpress type.[1]

In a 1911 presentation that recounts the problems resulting from teaching vertical writing to students, Superintendent of the New York City Schools, William H. Maxwell shared his upset:

"What were the results? Instead of writing vertical penmanship, our pupils, for the most part acquired a slow, stiff, backhand penmanship, unlovely to the eye, and therefore illegible, and they assumed just as unhygienic postures as before. With more reason than usual for their criticisms, businessmen raised a howl over the inefficiency of the schools. Our graduates were obliged to go to a commercial school to unlearn what they had been taught

continued from page 19

Figure 6. Postcard to the Oakland Hermitage in Millersburg, Missouri, ca1911 (author's collection).

in the public schools, and to acquire rapid and legible writing." [2]

As indicated by Maxwell, back hand is often also the result not of an attempt to write that way, but of a person who may have been taught a vertical writing style or library handwriting, only to find their writing to deteriorate over time and slope leftward.

Once a person begins to look for back hand, it seems to appear in many places, and for many reasons, including personal style. A longer list of uses and examples can be found in my draft essay "A History of American Back Hand and Backslant Handwriting and Penmanship."[3]

Telegraph Hand / Railway Hand 1864 to 1920?

It is easiest to see telegraph handwriting (also called telegraph hand, telegraph penmanship, and railway hand) on telegrams or in books of incoming / outgoing messages kept in the telegraph offices, though not all telegraph office writing is necessarily in the special style. Sometimes, the style also appears in correspondence or other written material. What distinguishes telegraph hand from any other styles are several elements: it has a base style of writing, for example running hand, commercial hand, Spencerian or a similar hand, or vertical style; however, there is a secondary style element of joining the words themselves—

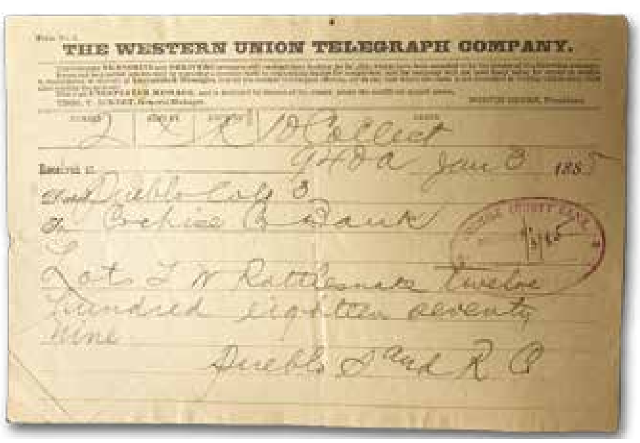
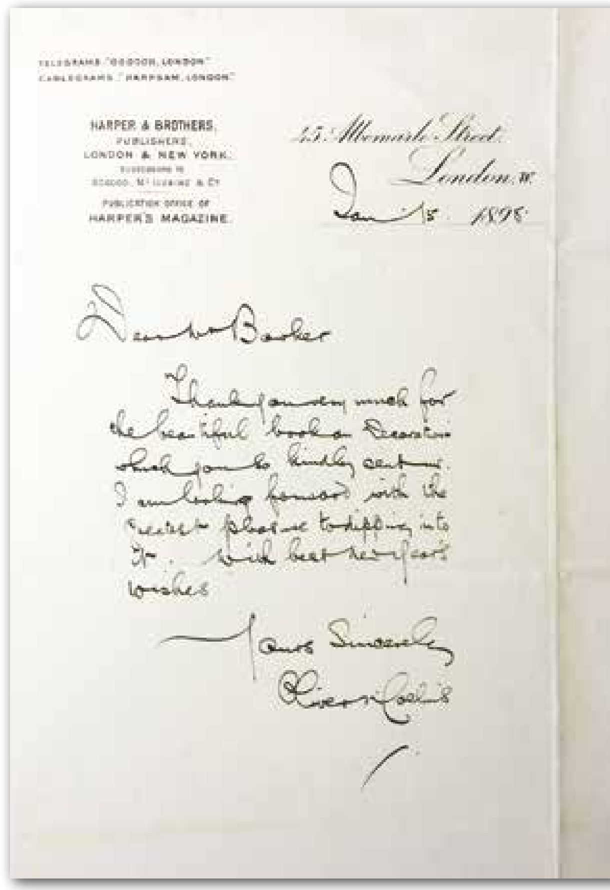

THE WESTERN UNION TELEGRAPH COMPANY.

Figure 7. Western Union telegram, 1885 (author's collection).

sometimes as few as two but not uncommonly as many as five words—and this alone can transform the base style. Other features may include the following: a tendency towards a round hand style; a tight rounded circling in the c's, o's, and a number of other letters; unusual joins, unusual looping (the pen may travel to the left to cross a "t" for example, and then continue to the next word); a vertical angle, or a regular slope. In 1910, Albert S. Osborn is the first to identify the style and publish an image of it, as far as I am aware.[4]

Most important of all of these stylistic elements is the almost decorative style of joining of words. This is the easiest to see, and the clearest indication that the style is telegraph hand.


HARPER & BROTHERS, PUBLISHERS, LONDON & NEW YORK.

HARPER'S MAGAZINE.

Figure 8. Oliver Collins to Richard Rogers Bowker, January 15, 1895 (author's collection).

Along with the telegrams I have for examples (figures 7 and 9), I have included an 1895 manuscript letter from London (figure 8) that I believe qualifies as telegraph hand - it is too tempting to pass up the chance to show that this style existed outside the United States, too.

There are several unusual elements to the example in figure 10: it is in pencil, it defies the notion that the ink needs to keep flowing in the line connecting words, nearly everything is looped together, and on the back of it one can see that there was some sort of carbon copy created from it.

I should add a caveat about this style. It is in some ways indistinguishable in instances where individuals have

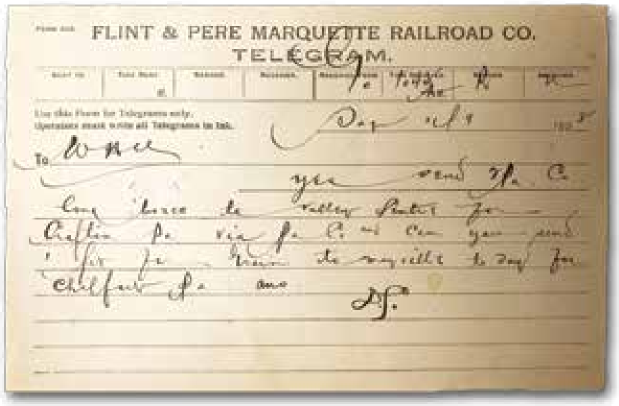

FLINT & PERE MARQUETTE RAILROAD CO.
TELEGRAM.

Figure 9. Flint & Père Marquette Railroad Co. telegram, 10:45 am., 1898, (author's collection).

decided to keep their pen on the paper and join words as they please, although in some case I have found these people to be former employees of railroad companies, or, I suspect they were trained as telegraph operators. I have begun to document these instances as well to see if this type of joined-word writing was confined to a period, time, place, etc. My best guess is that the habit of keeping the pen on the paper was most prevalent in the 1860s–1915. Is this due to the kinds of pens and inks, and their reliability and use? Is it only an attempt to write faster? Was there some implicit understanding that it meant also that one had written in haste? Was it a fancy decoration in social notes? As the number of my samples is not large enough, I have yet to reach any conclusions.

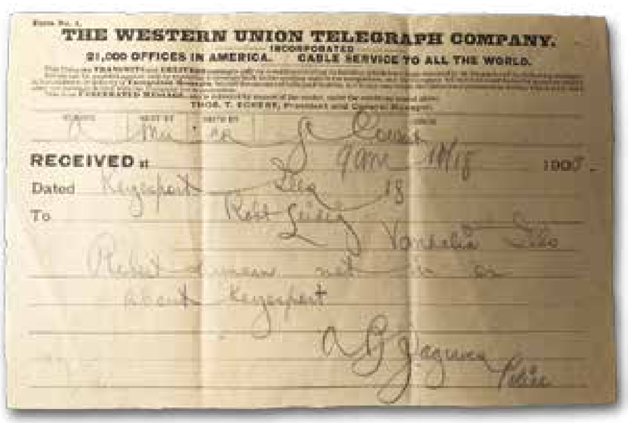

THE WESTERN UNION TELEGRAPH COMPANY.
21,000 OFFICES IN AMERICA. INCORPORATED CABLE SERVICE TO ALL THE WORLD.
RECEIVED at
Dated
To

Figure 10. Western Union telegram, 1900 (author's collection).

For a lengthier description and samples, see my essay "Telegraph Hand, or Railway Hand: The Writing Style of Telegraph Operators in Messages Sent and Also Received in Telegrams."[5]

Angular Hand / High Society Writing 1877 or earlier to present

The writing of those in high society may appear more like a series of angles than loops (think triangles or squares instead of curves); it may have long horizontal lines that end letters; or a very compact style with narrowed letters and strong lines enforcing the slanted angle; and the writing is often much harder to read than regular business penmanship.

This category is one of the most vulnerable to misinterpretation and inaccuracy. Sometimes, there are markers such as address, type of stationery, and the content of the letter that can reinforce the likelihood of wealth or status. It is best to verify the identity of the person, of course.

A few details worth mentioning: Not all people of wealth or status write in one way, nor do all people who write this way have wealth or status. As for the date range, I have not yet found the earliest dates or origin of such writing.

To render these examples less susceptible to misinterpretation, I present two sets of letters, each from the collections of wealthy families.

The first set is from Gertrude Vanderbilt's papers. (Whitney Museum of American Art, Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney papers. Gift of Flora Miller Irving.) The samples show how her writing style evolved and changed in just a few years, and it is a rare glimpse into a child's journey toward adulthood and the practiced hand of high society writing.

In the 1886 sample, figure 11, from Gertrude Vanderbilt's travel journal, one can see her youth — a child who is simply learning the basics of writing. By 1892, figure 12, her hand strongly exhibits high society style: the squared, angular writing with the heavy horizontal line of the letterforms, and the accentuated lines at the end of the letters.

I have also examined letters from male friends or suitors to Gertrude Vanderbilt around 1895. I admit to choosing

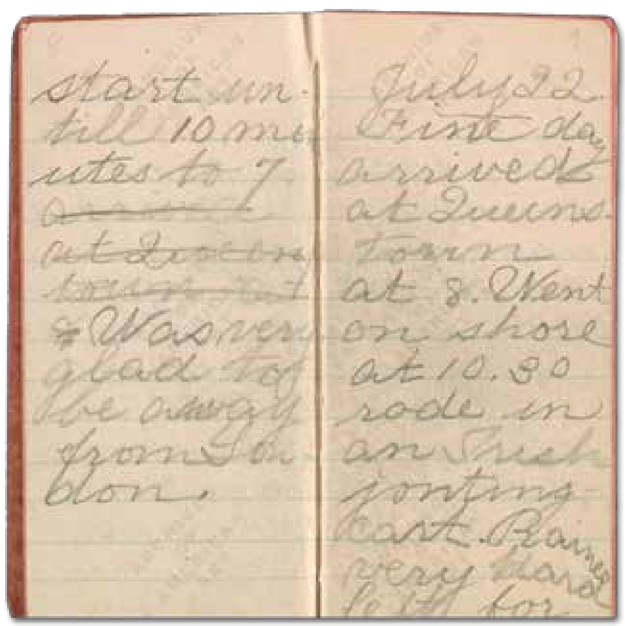


Figure 11. Gertrude Vanderbilt, Journal, Crossing the Atlantic from Liverpool to New York, circa 1886, Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney papers, 1851-1975, bulk, 1888-1942, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

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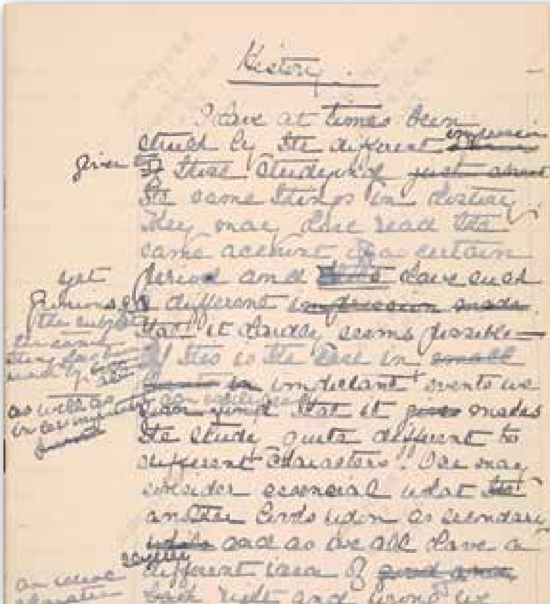
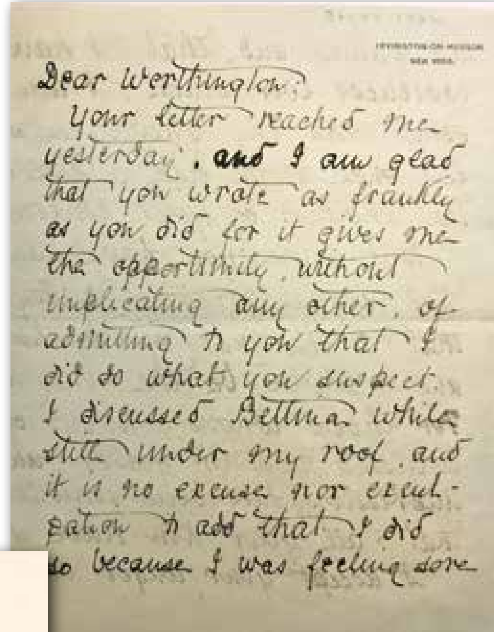


History.

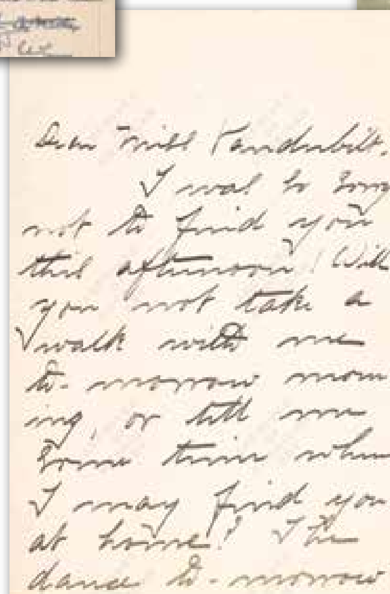
I have at times been struck by the different [illegible] given to those studying just about the same thing in history. They may have read the same account of a certain period and yet have each a different [illegible] that it hardly seems possible [illegible] it makes the [illegible] quite different to different characters. One may consider [illegible] and another [illegible] and so we all have a different idea [illegible]

Figure 12. Gertrude Vanderbilt, composition, history, 22 March 1892, Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney papers, 1851-1975, bulk, 1888-1942, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.



Dear Worthington:
Your letter reached me yesterday, and I am glad that you wrote as frankly as you did for it gives me the opportunity, without implicating any other, of admitting to you that I did so what you suspect. I discussed Bettina while still under my roof, and it is no excuse nor exculpation to add that I did so because I was feeling sore

Figure 14. Emily Ford to Worthington Chauncey Ford, 1902, Worthington Chauncey Ford papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library, New York.

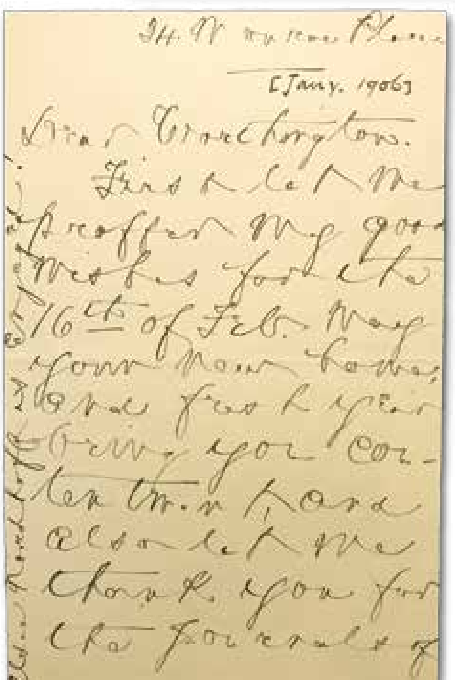


Dear Miss Vanderbilt,
I was so sorry not to find you this afternoon! Will you not take a walk with me to-morrow morning, or tell me some time when I may find you at home? The dance to-morrow

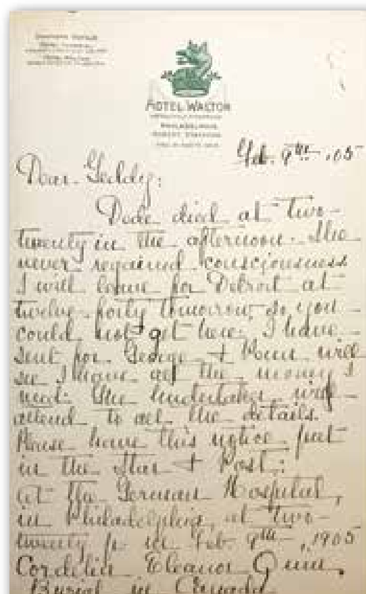
Figure 13. (left) Frank W. Andrews to Gertrude Vanderbilt, circa 1895, Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney papers, 1851-1975, bulk, 1888-1942, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

a sample (figure 13) that looked most angular in style. (It may be notable that on the second page of the letter, Mr. Andrews wrote his return address as "The Waldorf," a New York luxury hotel.) Several letters show that men in her life wrote in a similar style to Gloria Vanderbilt. Granted, the styles are different, but they both have narrow letters, sharp peaks at the top of the letters and sharp valleys at the bottom, and some other similarly angular elements. In general, men tend to be less likely to write as Gertrude Vanderbilt does, and there is a history of angular style as being intended more for women than for men.

The second set of high society writing samples is from the papers of Worthington Chauncey Ford an admired and successful scholar, historian, and librarian in his own right. But he was also from fine



24 W [illegible] Pl.
[Jany. 1906]
Dear Worthington.
First let me proffer my good wishes for the 16th of Feb. May your new born [illegible] bring you [illegible] also let me thank you for the journals of



Hotel Walton

Feb. 9th .05

Dear Teddy:
Dode died at two-twenty in the afternoon. She never regained consciousness. I will leave for Detroit at twelve forty tomorrow so you could not get here. I have sent for George + [illegible] will see [illegible] the undertaker will attend to all the details. Please have this notice put in the Star + Post:
At the German Hospital, in Philadelphia, at two-twenty p.m. Feb 9th 1905 Cordelia Eleanor Quinn. Burial in Detroit.

Figure 15. (above) Bettina Ford to Worthington Chauncey Ford, 9 February 1905, Worthington Chauncey Ford papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library.

Figure 16. (left) Kathleen Ford to Worthington Chauncey Ford, January 1906, Worthington Chauncey Ford papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library.

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The Man Who Invented *Playboy*

By Chip Rowe

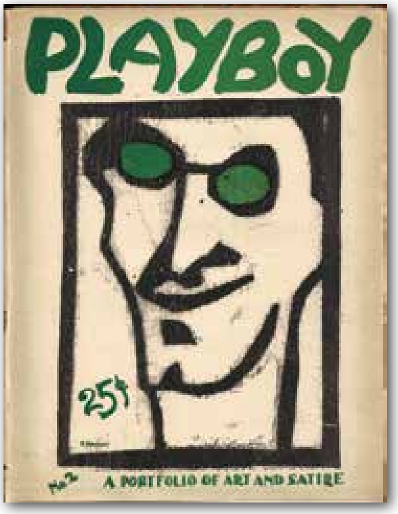

Figure 1. The second issue of Playboy*, March-April 1919, featured a woodcut image very reminiscent of Hugh Hefner (born 1926) on the cover [issues of* Playboy *are from the author's collection].*

In early 1974, a Chicago book scout named William Ostfeld spotted an early copy of *Playboy* in the window of a used bookstore — a *very* early copy. (Figure 1)

The magazine, which was about the size of an issue of *LIFE*, showcased on its cover a woodcut of what appeared to be Hugh Hefner, who had launched *Playboy* in 1953. Puzzled, Ostfeld opened the brittle cover to look inside. That's when he saw the publication date: 1919. What the hell?

In 1914, 26-year-old Egmont Arens ("Eggie" or "E.A." to friends) returned to New York City with dreams of becoming a poet. He had been sent to New Mexico as a teenager to recover from tuberculosis, attended college there, and worked as a cowboy and newspaper sports editor. In New York he married a fellow poet, Josephine Bell, who would be among those indicted for eight anti-war items published in the August 1917 issue of *The Masses* (its last).[1] Arens submitted his poetry for publication (*Collier's* printed one in May 1915 called "The Cool of Night") and became the managing editor of *War?* - the magazine of the newly formed Collegiate Anti-Militarism League which opposed U.S. troops doing military drills on campus in preparation for the Great War.

The partnership with *War?* did not last. In an undated letter to the League's president, Arens complained that he had been told he could make the publication "as far removed as possible from the ordinary Peace Tract… a bright and snappy journal." He offered to help finish the next issue but wanted $100 for his interest before he quit.

In 1917 Arens purchased the Washington Square Bookshop at 27 West 8th St. in Greenwich Village. (Figure 2) He also bought a used hand press,[2] which he set up in a back room. One of his first projects was a map and tongue-in-cheek guide to Bohemia, *The Little Book of Greenwich Village*, apparently reprinted many times but today scarce. He also published brochures, posters, prints, plays and books.

Arens's disappointment with the stridency of *War?*— coupled with the conversations among artists and writers who began using the chairs that lined the press room as a salon[3] — likely informed his most ambitious project. By the time the war ended in November 1918, Arens had created letterhead for his venture (figure 3), and in January 1919, *Poetry* carried a short announcement: Egmont Arens had launched a new magazine. The title was *Playboy*, probably after Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World*. One critic would later call it the first modern art magazine in America. (Figure 4)

In the years immediately after the war, Greenwich Village was teeming with radical optimists. Arens and other young intellects argued that Americans should stop looking to Europe for inspiration and create their own art and identity. America "has heard a great deal of talk about European culture," he wrote. "She is asking, 'Is there no American culture?' "

While a number of "little magazines" were published in New York in the 1920s, "*Playboy* was the aristocrat of the Greenwich Village press of the post-war era," wrote Albert Parry in his 1933 history of Bohemianism in America, *Garrets and Pretenders*. "It had many of the artists of *The Masses*, but the spirit of the revolutionary was manifestly absent. The period was first one of disillusionment, and then of prosperity; and the magazine resplendent with dazzling colors and fine paper. But the horseplay and the crazy-cat antics dominated even the beautiful *Playboy*. The new leader was irresponsibly called 'Eggplant' Arens, even in print," so named because of his perceived passive intellect.[4]

The men and women who agreed to contribute to *Playboy* were a Who's Who of Bohemia, including Rockwell Kent, William Gropper, Lola Ridge, Vachel Lindsay, Louise Bryant, Max Weber, Alfred Kreymborg, Djuna Barnes, D.H. Lawrence, Ben Hecht, Horace Brodsky, Mina Loy, Ethel Plummer, John Storrs, Alfred Frueh, William Zorach, Paul Gauguin, Paul Thevenaz, George Bellows, Alexander Brook, Alfred Stieglitz, Hunt Diedrich, Georgia O'Keeffe,

Figure 2. Promotional postcard, based on a photograph of Egmont Arens in his Greenwich Village book store [from the Special Collection Research Center of Syracuse University]

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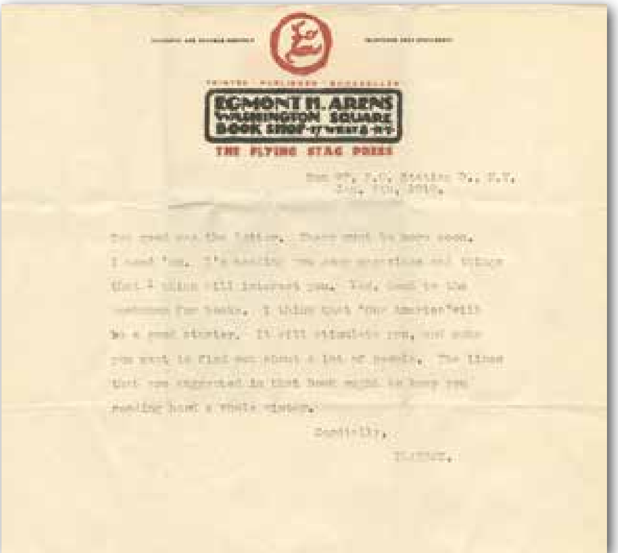

Figure 3. Letterhead designed for both the book store and Arens's, The Flying Stag Press [from the Special Collection Research Center of Syracuse University].

Sherwood Anderson, Edmund Wilson Jr., John Dos Passos, James Joyce and E.E. Cummings.

In promoting his creation, Arens wrote: "No magazine in America has heretofore succeeded in being both alive and modernly beautiful. The humorous magazines have lacked art. The art magazines have been dull and old-fashioned. Now with weapons of art & satire comes a *Playboy* to fight the fight of the Moderns, to fight with laughter, not bitterness, for the work of this our generation. Finally, now a periodical free of puritanical suppressions, with somewhat the flavor of the European magazines, yet possessed of wholesome vigor which is essentially American."[5]

Arens's marriage to Josephine was faltering, and by late 1919 he was sending issues of *Playboy* to a paramour in Kentucky, Camille Davied, whom he claimed to have fallen in love with after meeting her twice for a total of 12 hours.[6] He signed his letters "Playboy" and said of the magazines, "Don't show this to the Kentucky folks!" On December 10, 1919, Camille wrote back:

"Your "Playboys" have been the center of a heated discussion. Edie, my Dresden China little sister, with her mouth full of pins and her lap full of pink evening dress, and her retrouseé nose more retrouseé than ever, hates it quite emphatically. Edie generally hates what she hates with emphasis. The drawing, according to her, is out of line and the poetry revolting. Modern art is neither beautiful nor useful, and has no excuse whatsoever for existence. The etchings, which are lovely, only please her. Alma thinks it has a "heady" effect like mixed drinks. And nice Mary Morris of Virginia, who is studying illustrating, says that the wood and linoleum block cuts are masterly studies in design (see figure 5)…. I think I must like it very much I find myself defending it so vehemently."

Soon after Arens wrote to Davied:

> "It just occurs to me to send you copies of two letters I wrote to would-be contributors to *Playboy*. People seem to think that because I sometimes publish poems which are quite frank that I will also publish poems which are riské [*sic*]. One man wrote me, 'Please don't use my name, as I am not naturally naughty.' I sent his poems back right away after that, because I didn't want to publish any poems about which the author had that kind of sentiment."

Playboy lasted for eight issues[7] — the first five in 1919, one in 1921 and two in 1923 after Arens had become the art editor of *Vanity Fair*. (Figures 6 and 7)

Funding the magazine was a continuing challenge. In Issue 2, Arens noted to readers that "to function properly as an Art Magazine, *Playboy* must have color plates. The high cost of process printing puts this out of the reach of a twenty-five cent magazine." He encouraged readers to donate to what he called the "Playboy Fund" by sending him checks. Issues 4 and 5 were published as a double number to save money on paper, and in 1923 he organized subscriber-only dances to raise funds.

In December 1925, the *New Yorker* noted that a group of five editors, including Arens, hoped to revive *The Masses* as *New Masses*. "From what I hear," reported the *New Yorker* wag, "the new paper is very pleasing to the eye, printed throughout in three colors, with forty per cent of its pages reserved for cartoons, decorations and the higher art. To make this possible, Egmont Arens, once with *Vanity Fair* — note how times change — is to stamp it with his genius and print it on his own press, the press that prints

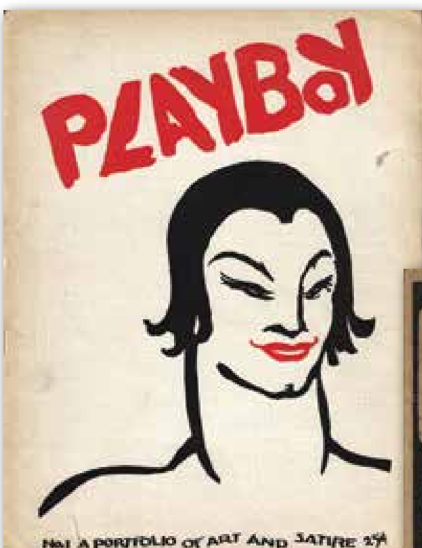

Figure 4. (above) The first issue of Playboy, January 1919.

Figure 5. (right) The third issue of Playboy, Spring 1919, with cover art by J.J.A. Murphy, known for the "sculpturesque realism" of his woodcuts.

Figure 6. The records of subscribers to Playboy, 1919-1921 [from the Special Collection Research Center of Syracuse University].

the *Playboy* Magazine. Certainly Mr. Arens has had great experience in getting out periodicals worth looking at, and will do well with this new thing if anybody can."

In 1927 Arens became managing editor under Rockwell Kent of a new magazine, *Creative Arts*. While there, he apparently toyed, perhaps with Kent's encouragement, with reviving *Playboy*. Notes preserved in his papers at Syracuse University on the back of Creative Arts letterhead show him playing around with subtitles – "Playboy: A Picture Magazine of People's Play" and "Playboy: A Magazine of Gaiety." It would be "devoted to the Recreations," including theater, dance, Harlem and art galleries but also winter sports in Canada and the North, automobiles, flying, the country home, gardening, women's fashion and men's wear.

"This magazine would feature PICTURES of things," he wrote. "It would be a magazine to be *looked at*. The reading matter would be secondary in importance. The editorial staff would consist of artists and photographers rather than writers." Further, he wrote, it would be "a magazine that assumes that there is some fun to be had. Anything but bored."

Notably, it would need "sex appeal," which would be found in "pictures of beautiful actresses taken by our own photographers. Each photo used, however, must conform to a high artistic standard." There also would be "reproduction of works of art" and "drawings of gay scenes of sport and nightlife in which sex is subtly played up as in *Jugend* [a German art magazine] and *La Vie Parisienne* [a risqué French weekly], but less broadly, to conform to Am[erican] Taste." In pencil he had notated the page: "Photo girl blowing smoke rings."

By the end of the decade, Arens had left publishing for a new career at Calkins and Holden, where in 1929 he became the agency's first director of industrial styling. In 1935 he founded his own design firm, which by the mid-1940s had grown to include 30 employees. Among other assignments, he would design the iconic KitchenAid mixer, the Eight O'Clock Coffee packaging and the Hobart meat slicer. That, and his pioneering of streamlined design and "consumer engineering," is what he is remembered for.

After William Ostfeld, the Chicago book scout, discovered Arens's magazine, he purchased the issue (No. 2) for $5 and proceeded to make the publication far less obscure by alerting the editors at *Genesis*, a derivative of Hefner's *Playboy*. In May 1974 the magazine reprinted pages from the issue and its cover, noting the happenstance of Hefner's doppelganger but more pointedly suggesting its rival had stolen the name and inspiration for his more famous magazine.

Ostfeld would note with some irritation that the U.S. press largely ignored this revelation. For his part, Hefner has always insisted the name was suggested by a friend during a brainstorming session (rejected titles included *Stag Party*,[8] *Top Hat* and *Satyrs*). Ironically, Hefner's then-wife didn't like the title, saying it sounded outdated and made her think of the 1920s. That didn't bother Hefner, who associated the decade with "high living, parties, wine, women and song – the things we want the magazine to mean."

There is no record in Egmont Arens's papers of what he thought of Hefner's magazine, but he remained proud of his own. Before his daughter Patricia married in 1954, he presented his future son-in-law with a bound set.[9]

Endnotes

[1] Bell's contribution was a poem in defense of Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman, who had been imprisoned for opposing the draft. One of her co-defendants, Art Young, recalled that the defense attorney had handed the poem to the judge. "His Honor adjusted his glasses, read it slowly, then handed it back to Mr. Hillquit, saying, 'Do you call that a poem?' Mr. Hillquit replied, 'Your Honor, it is so called in the indictment.' The judge said, 'Indictment quashed.' "

[2] Arens was discreet about the press. Margaret Anderson, who published a magazine called *The Little Review* that Arens sold in the shop, had been printing excerpts from James Joyce's suppressed *Ulysses*. The Society for the Suppression of Vice

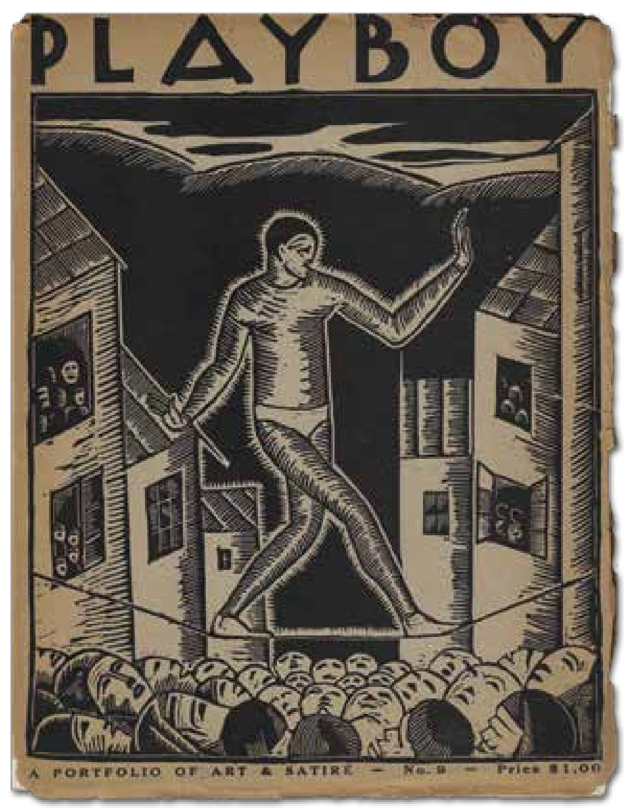

Figure 7. The final issue of Playboy (volume 2 number 2) July 1923

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took notice after the 13th installment. John S. Sumner, the head of the Society, showed up one day at the bookstore, and he and Anderson argued loudly. Soon after, she was indicted. At about the same time, Arens's press was printing an anonymous translation of Arthur Schnitzler's *La Ronde (Hands Around)*, a drama of linked episodes each ending in sex, and Arens was hatching a plan with Rex Stout to publish a 12-volume edition of Casanova's memoirs illustrated by Rockwell Kent.

[3] Stout, a childhood friend of Josephine Bell, would recall sitting in the shop in 1921 listening for hours as Theodore Dreiser and H.L. Mencken argued politics with "crusty vigor."

[4] The chapter of Parry's book that mentioned Playboy had first been published in *The American Mercury* in 1931, after which Arens wrote H.L. Mencken to offer a follow-up article "extolling the spirit that animated its publication." Mencken politely declined.

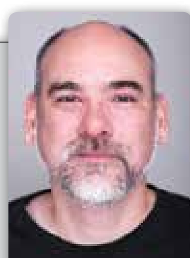
[0] This was in many ways similar to the manifesto Hugh Hefner published in the first issue of his *Playboy* in 1953. "If you like your entertainment served up with humor, sophistication and spice, *Playboy* will become a very special favorite.... Affairs of state will be out of our province. We don't expect to solve any world problems or prove any great moral truths. If we are able to give the American male a few extra laughs and a little diversion from the anxieties of the Atomic Age, we feel we've justified our existence."

[6] Arens and Josephine divorced in 1923. That same year he married his second wife. They divorced in 1930 and seven days later he married Camille Davied. They had a daughter, Patricia, and divorced in 1952. Arens's fourth wife, Matilde Zwilling, survived him.

[7] The *Playboy* subscriber cards for 1919, 1920 and 1921 are in Arens's papers at Syracuse University and include more than 250 names. About a third are from New York but there are also requests from Cuba, Japan, France and China. As part of their divorce settlement, Arens sold the bookshop to Josephine for $1. They remained friendly. In an undated letter, she sent him a listing for "an interesting item that came to us in the mail today. Just thought you would like to see it. 1919 & 1923 – *when* was that time?" It was a dealer listing for seven issues of *Playboy*, "an important magazine of protest," for $29.50.

[8] This title was abandoned when *Stag* magazine threatened legal action. Notably, at the same time he launched *Playboy* in 1919, Arens's established an imprint called The Flying Stag Press.

[9] In a letter dated 25 April 1954, W.P. Cumming wrote Arens: "One of the first things that Ted showed me in his rooms in Cambridge were the bound sets of *The Playboy* which you had generously given him. He told me how you had edited, published and printed it, and showed me the since-famous names whose early writing was there." In 1935 Arens wrote to a friend that he had found 16 complete sets and 139 loose issues in storage on East 18th Street. Single issues typically sell today for $300 to $500.



Chip Rowe, had a 19-year career as editor and reporter at the second *Playboy* magazine, writing editorials on free speech and civil rights as well as writing or editing more than 50 features, including a five-part series on male sexual development that won science journalism awards from the Wistar Institute and the American Institute of Biological Sciences. In the 1990s he published fanzines such as *Chip's Closet Cleaner* and *This is the Spinal Tap Zine* and in 1996 edited an anthology, *The Book of Zines: Readings from the Fringe* (Henry Holt) and created a website for it, zinebook.com, which is still active.

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lineage (great grandson of Noah Webster, a descendant also of the second president of Harvard College, and a father who was a railroad president and whose Ford Collection became part of the New York Public Library).

Worthington's sister Emily, writing in 1902 (figure 14) shows long horizontal lines across the letter "t" much like those of the style of Worthington's wife, Bettina (figure 15), though here Emily has a curving line. Bettina has a round hand angular style, but notice the lines at the end of the letters and the long lines across the letter "t."

Worthington's sister, Kathleen Ford writes a very distinctive, and at what looks at first to be a visually chaotic style (figure 16), but it is quite easy to read because of its size and the letters become familiar very quickly.

Conclusion

While we have paleographers to study medieval manuscripts, there are no paleographers of American handwriting. As we are already seeing the demise of the written word and the ability of young people to be able to read it, it is important for those who can still read cursive script and who can see its intricacies to share what knowledge they have.

There are many under-researched or undiscovered categories of writing not mentioned here. If you find an item that you believe is unique or deserves attention, please let me know.

Endnotes

[1] Bazeley, Charles William, *Elements of penmanship: simplified and illustrated*, second ed., Philadelphia, Bazeley, 1821.

[2] *Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Associated Academic Principals at Syracuse High School, Dec. 28-30, 1911, with Programs of the 1909 and 1910 Meetings, Proceedings of the Elementary School Principals and Teachers, Syracuse, 1911*, p. 129, Utica, New York: L. C. Childs & Son, 1912.

[3] Kaminski, David, "A History of American Back hand and Backslant Handwriting and Penmanship, 2017 (davidkaminski.org)

[4] Osborn, Albert S., *Questioned Documents*, Rochester: The Lawyers' Co-operative Publishing Co., 1910.

[5] Kaminski, David, "Telegraph Hand, or Railway Hand: The Writing Style of Telegraph Operators in Messages Sent and Also received in Telegrams," 2017, (davidkaminski.org)

David Kaminski, works as a teacher of English and media, but he spends his extra time as a collector and independent researcher of American handwriting. His goal is to seek out the less familiar styles and categories of writing as a way to properly understand the complex and complete history of handwriting in America. He would like to extend thanks to Tiffany Alexander and Jane R. Siegel for their work as editors on this article.

ESA Member Interview

Tom Topol is our only member living in Thailand, however Tom is a German national. As befits someone with a passport crowded with evidence of world travel, he has for many years specialized in collecting passports. He believes that these documents from the past offer hidden narratives to the field of ephemera. He offers clues to two such stories from two widely-separated periods in American history.

US Diplomatic Passport of Orland C. Harp and his wife Janet, 1952

Lieutenant Harp was naval assistant attaché and assistant naval attaché for air to the Embassy of the United States of America at Baghdad, Iraq. (Figures 1, 2, 3)

Figure 1. Leather protective cover, and the first page of the diplomatic passport of Lieut. Harp. His wife's cover was similar, in red.

Charles's (the name he preferred to Orland) passport has 48 pages plus another 14 extensions, for a total of 62 pages full of interesting visas and stamps (figure 4). Diplomatic visas present are from Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Cyprus, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Aden Colony (which was at that time British Crown colony). Janet's passport also has 48 pages but is not as much traveled as his. Their minor child was added to Janet's passport in 1954 by the US Embassy in Baghdad, Iraq (figure 5).

Figure 2. Photograph and signature page for Lieut. Harp and
Figure 3. Photograph and signature page for Janet Harp.

Harp reached the rank of Lieutenant Commander, US Navy, having served in WWII, Korea & Vietnam. Charles died in 2009 and is buried at Pensacola, Escambia County, Florida, together with his wife Janet who died in 2014.

Their passports capture this young family at a heady time for American diplomacy - the confidence gained in World War II not yet compromised by the Korean fighting, nor Viet Nam to come.

Figure 5. Amendment page to Janet Harp's passport for infant Joseph Harp.

Passport issued to three Delaware Indians, 1756

This outstanding handwritten passport was recently auctioned by Swann Galleries. Apparently, three Delaware Indians had assisted with treaty negotiations "at the risque of their lives." Secretary Richard Peters (1704-1776) to Robert Hunter Morris (ca1700-1765), Lieutenant Governor of Pennsylvania, wrote this draft of safe passage (figure 6). Presumably the Indians carried the fair copy.

The three natives had been at the signing of a treaty in Easton, Pennsylvania, along with Captain Newcastle and Conrad Weiser - on July 26, just three weeks before this passport. (See *Benjamin Franklin, Pennsylvania, and the First Nations: the Treaties of 1736-62*, edited by Susan Kalter 2007, pages 195-9.) In October 1758 the culminating Treaty of Easton was signed by the chiefs

Figure 4. Diplomatic visa e.g. for Cyprus.

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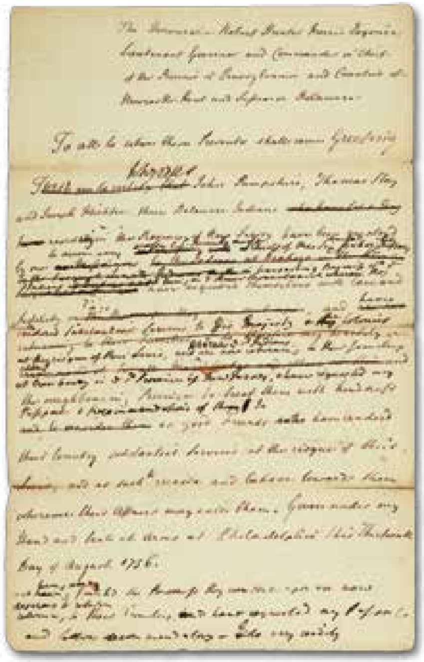

Figure 6. 1756 draft of passport issued to three Delaware Indians by Governor Morris of Pennsylvania. Image courtesy of Swann Auction Galleries where the document was sold November 17, 2016 for $1,000. It reads:

The Honourable Robert Hunter Morris Esquire, Lieutenant Governor and Commander in Chief of the Province of Pennsylvania and Counties of Newcastle Kent and Sussex on Delaware.

Whereas John Pumpshire, Thomas Story and Joseph Michtee, three Delaware Indians residing in the Province of New Jersey, have been employed to accompany Capt L C Newcastle, one of the chiefs of the Six united Nations of Indians by me in transacting Business with ye Indians living on ye River Susquehannah, wherein they have acquitted themselves with care and fidelity and have thereby rendered substantial services to His Majesty & the Colonies at the risque of their lives, and whereas ye sd Indians are now returning to their families at Cranberry in ye sd province of New Jersey, & have requested my passport & recommendations of those in the neighboring provinces to treat them with kindness as good friends who have rendered their Country substantial services at the risques of their lives, and as such to receive and behave towards them wherever their affairs may call them. Given under my Hand and Seals of Arms at Philadelphia this thirteenth day of August 1756.

of 13 Native American nations representing tribes of the Iroquois, Lenape (Delaware), and Shawnee, in a ceremony attended by more than 500 natives. Perhaps John Pumpshire, Thomas Story and Joseph Michtee were among them.

Tom Topol, is also a member of the Ephemera Society in the United Kingdom and consults internationally with collectors, foundations, museums and news media on the subject of passports. His website Passport-collector.com is a goldmine of information on historic and important travel documents. Tom is covering also current news on passports & visas, border security and security printing via his Facebook @PassportHistory.

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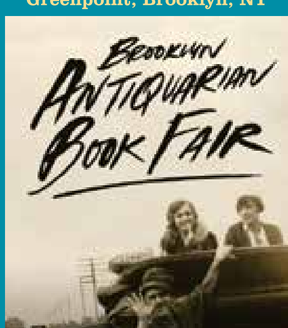
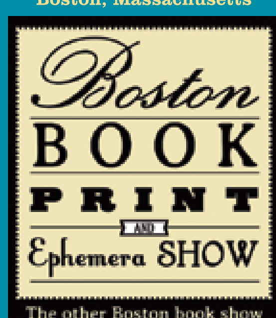


November 11

Boston Book, Print, and Ephemera Show

Back Bay Events Center
180 Berkeley St.
Boston, Massachusetts



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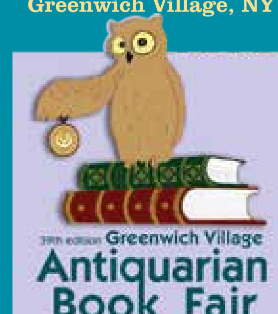

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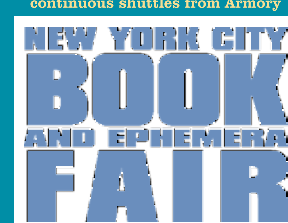

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