

THE EPHEMERA JOURNAL

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Baseball, Beards, Bands, and the Babes: *Michigan's House of David Religious Community*

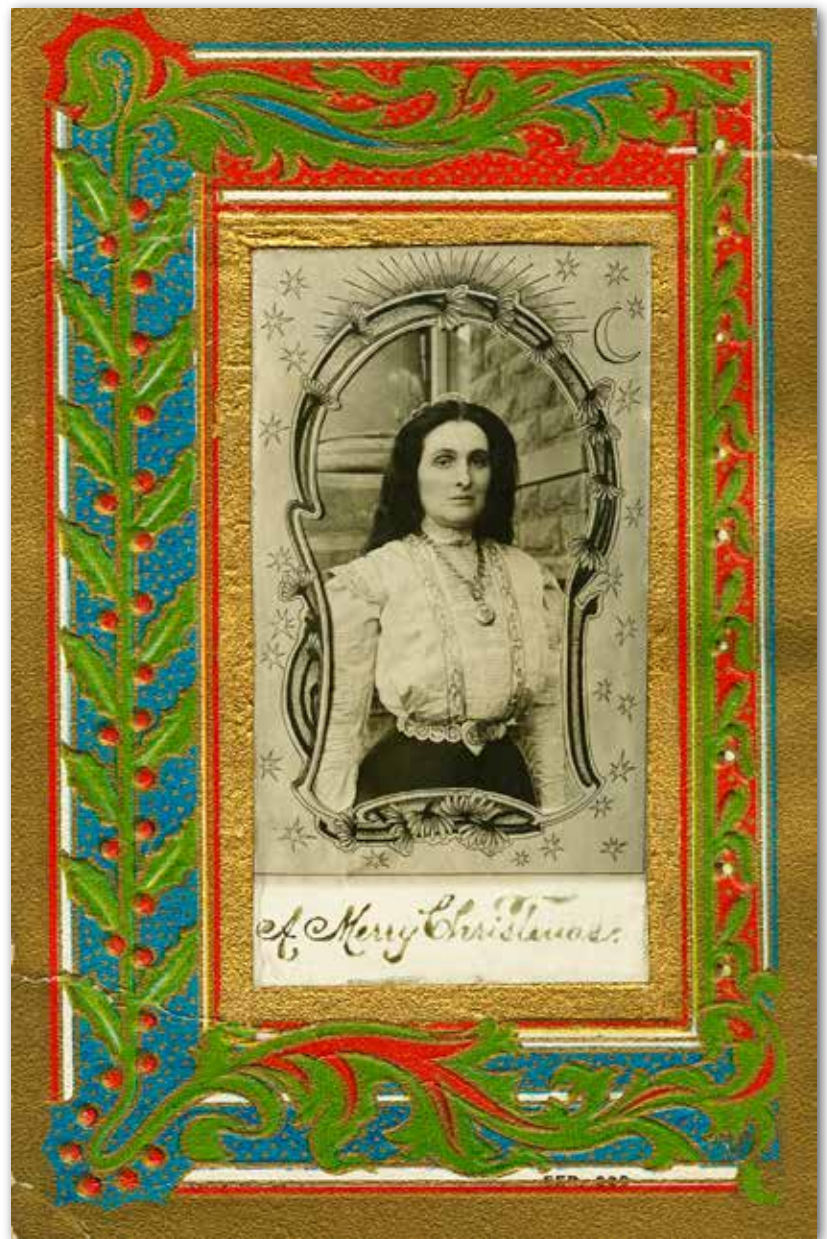
BY CHRISTIAN GOODWILLIE

What do celibacy, vegetarianism, beards, Babe Ruth, Babe Didrikson, and Satchel Paige all have in common? They were all associated with one of America's most fascinating intentional religious communities: the Israelite House of David.

Colloquially known as the House of David, it was founded at Benton Harbor, Michigan, in 1903 by Benjamin and Mary Purnell. The community is still active today, along with its offshoot Mary's City of David. The imposing communal buildings line East Britain Avenue about two miles west of downtown St. Joseph and Benton Harbor.

The Israelites, as locals called them, are part of a lineage of Christian Israelite messengers that begins with Joanna Southcott in late eighteenth century England. The Israelites' interpretation of the Old and New Testaments underpins their belief that seven messengers would be sent to oversee the ingathering of the faithful. From among these people the 144,000 elect, as specified in the Book of Revelation, would comprise an androgynous and immortal population—neither Jew nor gentile—to oversee the settlement of a new earth following the apocalypse. To purify the body in preparation for these events the Israelites eschew sexual relations, adhere to a strict vegetarian diet, and follow the Nazirite law as specified in Numbers 6. Practically this means that they do not trim their hair or beards, abstain from alcohol, and also do not bury their own dead—they in fact do not acknowledge the reality of death.

How then, does this quest for a separate and consecrated eternal life bear on something as seemingly opposite as collecting ephemera? Fortunately for paper fanatics the Israelites



Continued on Page 4

Figure 1. ca1910 Christmas card incorporating photogravure of Mary Purnell.

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The Ephemera Journal

The
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Society
of America

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Deadlines: April 1, August 1,
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Dear Members and Friends:

Spring has arrived and tomes about ephemera are popping up like daffodils.

I share a few titles of books presently stacked on my nightstand. *Studies in Ephemera, Text and Image in Eighteenth Century Print* (Bucknell University Press) contains an engaging essay on the 18th century ephemera holdings of the American Antiquarian Society by former ESA President Georgia Barnhill – example: a 1765 bookbinder's label depicting the craftsman at his bench preserves a rare period image of "the working man." Speaking of binder labels, Dr. Gayle Garlock has written the scholarly and eminently readable *Canadian Binders' Tickets and Booksellers' Labels* (Oak Knoll Press) which explores label printing methods ranging from letterpress to hot-foil stamping and analyzes label imagery. *Tickets to the Healing Arts: Medical Lecture Tickets of the 18th and 19th Centuries* (Oak Knoll Books) illustrates the period when medical education was achieved by paying professors directly for beautifully printed admission tickets to lectures. *Elegantissima: The Design & Typography of Louise Fili* (Princeton Architectural Press) is a feast for the eyes containing wondrous examples of an acclaimed graphic designer, including a 2012 Love postage stamp. The latter provides a segue to *A History of Britain in Thirty-Six Postage Stamps* (Picador), in which author Chris West shows how stamps have always "mirrored" the events of their time.

Speaking of stamps, on May 31, 2016, in Meeting Room 1E07, 2:00-4:00, at the Javits Center, New York City, in connection with the World Stamp Show, the Ephemera Society will host *Topical and Archival Treasures: Ephemera Collections in New York City Institutions*. Distinguished librarians and archivists from the New-York Historical Society, Museum of the City of New York, The Center for Jewish History, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Academy of Medicine Library, Columbia University, and Carnegie Hall will be participating. I urge you to consider attending.

We are planning ephemera events par excellence in Seattle from October 6, through October 9, 2016 in conjunction the Seattle Antiquarian Book Fair. On October 8, the Ephemera Society and the Seattle Public Library are co-sponsoring a free symposium at the downtown Central Library featuring a special collections curator who will speak about a 19th century gatherer of Klondike gold rush broadsides and politically-related street handbills; Beautiful Angle, graphic designers of letterpress posters; and University of Washington students interpreting a vintage scrapbook. Tours of special collections of the Washington State Historical Research Library, the Sophie Frye Bass Library of the Museum of History & Industry, the Special Collections of the Seattle Public Library, and the Special Collections of the University of Washington Library are in the planning stages.

The Power of Prints The Legacy of William M. Ivins and A. Hyatt Mayor (The Metropolitan Museum of Art), is a comprehensive exhibit catalog of one of the world's greatest collections of printed material from Renaissance masterpieces to ephemera. On March 21, 2016, the author of this catalog and curator of this exhibit, Dr. Freyda Spira, marvelously guided a group of Society members on a tour of this Metropolitan Museum exhibit, which included postcards, paper dolls, tradecards and other ephemera representing the hundreds of thousands of "small-scale" lithographs in the Met's collection. Through the good graces of collection managers Holly Phillips and Liz Zanis, ESA members were also treated to a private viewing of a truly vast array of supremely scarce ephemera from the 303,000-item Jefferson R. Burdick Collection. In 1960 Burdick wrote that his ephemera collection was akin to "a magic carpet that takes you away from the work-a-day cares to havens of relaxing quietude where you can relive the pleasures and adventures of a past day brought to life in vivid pictures and prose." May this spring bring you such relaxing quietude.

Bruce Shyer,
President

ESA's theme of "Politics, Patriotism & Protest" was certainly timely – and the whole weekend event was full of energy and optimism, with the welcome sense that ephemera appeals to the young or beginning collector. Coverage of the conference speeches, in the form of video and slide presentations, will be available on our web site: ephemerasociety.org.

The exhibits showcased remarkable material from eleven collectors, who participated in an Exhibitor Roundtable on the final day to explain the how and why of the panels they prepared, and point out a particular favorite piece. **Gejus van Diggele** had been loath to bring too many actual examples from The Netherlands through U.S. Customs, and so had prepared an electronic presentation, "The French Revolution Documented on Reused Playing cards"

- **Beth Carroll-Horrocks** "Rulers of Politics and Government"
- **Diane DeBlois** "Hats: Fashion's Crowning Touch"
- **Charles Epting** "The National Recovery Act Emergency Issue: America's Most Controversial Postage Stamp"
- **George Fox** "Patriotic Imagery on 19th Century American Advertising Trade Cards & Ephemera"
- **Kit Hinrichs** "Long May She Wave"
- **Stuart Lutz** "Pro-War and Anti-War Perspectives on Vietnam"
- Stuart Lutz "Great Leaders of the War / The American Fighting Man"
- **Sue Lynn McDaniel** "Campaigning in Kentucky: the Rather-Westerman Political Collection at Western Kentucky University"
- **Renée H. Reynolds** "Return to Sender: Subversion, Artistamps, and the Mail Art Movement, 1970s to Present"
- **Dick Sheaff** "The 2003 Old Glory 'Prestige Booklet' of Postage Stamps"
- **Bruce Shyer** "Old Glory: Patriotic Advertising" arranged his ephemera of the flag on colored pages to suggest the flag itself (illustrated in photo here).



The Philip Jones Fellowship recipient:



Shana Klein, Ph.D. in Art and Art History at the University of New Mexico, was an American Print Collectors Society Fellow, a Winterthur Museum Research Fellow, a Wyeth Predoctoral Fellow of the Smithsonian American Art Museum, and Managing Editor of the online *Food, Media and Culture* journal of American University. She is now the Baird Society Resident Scholar at the Smithsonian National Museum of American History. Her book project, *The Fruits of*

Empire: Contextualizing Food in Post-Civil War American Art and Culture, reveals how everyday representations of fruit provided a platform for artists and viewers to discuss the nation's most heated debates over land, labor, and race that determined the course of the American empire. She believes this new perspective on food advertising will contribute to a wide variety of disciplines such as Art History, Environmental History, American Studies, and Food Studies. She also incorporates food ephemera in the classroom – trade cards, fruit crate labels, and seed catalogues—to show how food, across visual images and objects, shaped American society.

In this Issue...

A theme for this issue might be – ephemera outliers. **Rick Ring's** Trinity College student presenters were such a breath of fresh optimism for collecting that we present here Donny Zaldin's coverage of the presentation. And Professor Ring has agreed to provide a column on his work with ephemera and youth in future issues. For our student piece this issue, **Renée H. Reynolds**, a recent Ph.D. in popular culture, offers a short piece based on her exhibit at ESA 36. **Donny Zaldin** gave a short presentation at ESA 34 that inspired the longer piece here on the Victorian poor – who appear so little in advertising iconography. African Americans, for much of the 20th century, were similarly excluded from mainstream ephemera. **Elvin Montgomery** in his presentation at ESA 36, emphasized that ephemera (inexpensive and easy to distribute) was an especially powerful tool for African Americans within their communities. Here he provides an overview of 20th century themes. **Claude Johnson**, who presented at ESA 35, is devoting his professional life to making sure that the ephemeral history of Black basketball (and other sports) is not only preserved, but offering inspiration to inner city youths, and providing evidence for Hall of Fame induction. And our lead article by **Christian Goodwillie**, who also presented at ESA 35, reveals how a 'fringe' religious organization, with decidedly non-standard beliefs and lifestyle, created a welcome niche in Michigan, and even national, entertainment.

—Diane DeBlois, editor



Figure 2. ca1910 unused envelope image of Benjamin Purnell.

were highly active in business, specifically the entertainment and hospitality industries. Some of their missionary efforts were conducted within the confines of their own amusement park, Eden Springs, which was opened in 1908. They also had a famous touring band, and barnstorming baseball and basketball teams that played all over North America, and even in Europe, until the mid-twentieth century. These endeavors left a graphically rich paper trail comprising, in many cases, the only remaining evidence of their impressive entrepreneurship.

Benjamin and Mary Purnell were both from Kentucky. They were followers of “Prince” Michael Mills, leader of a community of Christian Israelite followers of the sixth messenger James Jezreel. Known as

“Flying Rollers” from the divine writing received by Jezreel and published as the *Flying Roll*, this Detroit-based community was disbanded following allegations of sexual misconduct leveled against Mills, who was jailed in 1892. Subsequently, on March 12, 1895, Benjamin and Mary Purnell were jointly anointed with what Israelites call the “graft”—that is, they were grafted onto the lineage of seven messengers. In fact, they comprised the seventh messenger. The Christmas card in figure 1 probably dates from around 1910 and features Mary following the establishment of the House of David in 1903. She is wearing an enameled gold watch adorned with symbols of the sect, and the heart-shaped central panel of her belt is emblazoned with a “B” for her husband Benjamin.

The Purnells sent out missionary teams to preach all over the United States and Canada. Their message about the ingathering at Benton Harbor even spread to the British Isles and Australia, where followers of James Jezreelite, and his predecessor, the fifth messenger John Wroe, lived. The envelope in figure 2 dates from 1910 or earlier and features Benjamin’s head surrounded by a symbolically significant array of seven hearts, a seven-pointed star, and a dove of peace alighting on his head—as had the graft. The number seven appears throughout the Book of Revelation, and Israelite publications and architecture often incorporate subtle design elements or iconography in groups of seven.

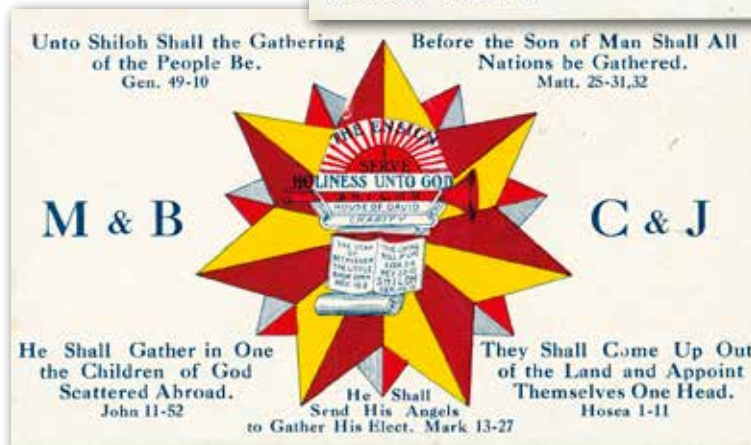


Figure 3: Calling cards of Israelite preachers.



Figure 4. Matchbook, Federal Match Corp. New York, for the Grande Vista Motor Court and Resort Lodge opened in 1935. Operated by the House of David, it featured a theatre, ballroom, restaurant, bar, deluxe accommodations, and a gas station.

Israelite preachers handed out calling cards (figure 3). They contain similar iconography to the envelope, and additionally feature Shiloh's trumpet heralding the message of ingathering. "Shiloh," the "spiritual-child" (Spirit of Truth), represents the anointing and sealing of the church, and is the spirit that foments the ingathering. The card features the initials "M & B" for Mary and

Benjamin, "C & J," possibly referring to Christ and Joanna (Southcott, the first messenger), and scriptural verses pertinent to the ingathering. In 1929, following the death of Benjamin Purnell, the community separated into two factions. One remained at the original Colony site under the leadership of H. T. Dewhirst. The other faction followed Mary Purnell two blocks further west on East Britain Avenue and constructed an entirely new Colony, The Israelite House of David, as Re-organized by Mary Purnell. This community was colloquially known as Mary's City of David. From 1929 onward each Colony operated their own business enterprises, sometimes in direct competition with each other.

As converts to the faith arrived from all over the world the community's neighbors in Benton Harbor grew increasingly curious about the sect living on the edge of town. In 1908, the House of David opened the Eden Springs amusement park, using the venue as a business enterprise, but also as a way to circulate Israelite literature to visitors. Eden Springs was a huge tourist attraction well into the 1970s. It featured a large amphitheater where the Israelite bands played (as well as touring performers), an aviary, zoo, beer garden, vegetarian restaurant, and a mile-long miniature railroad. Community members built two train trestles to span the ravines that dot the wooded parklands. Bearded Israelite engineers drove visitors around the park for decades. Eventually, "midget autos"—made at the Colony—were introduced. Guests could stay in cabins,



Figure 5. Post-1944 brochure for Eden Springs.

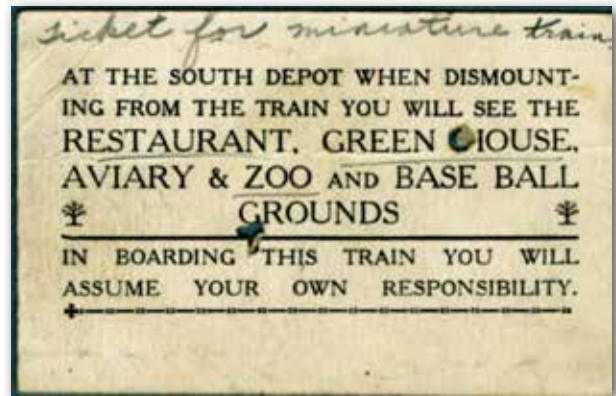


Figure 6. Punched ticket for Eden Springs miniature railroad.

or in the Colony's nearby Grande Vista Motel (figure 4). A number of different bi-fold promotional brochures for the amusement park were published before 1970. The example in figure 5 dates to after 1944 based on its mention of the Twin Cities Airport.

Tickets for the miniature railroad are some of the most visually appealing ephemera from the Colony. A complete checklist of types has not been made, but at least thirty different basic designs and variants exist; the one in figure 6 has been punched by the conductor. The front bears a photograph of the park showing the restaurant. The reverse advertises Colony amenities, and also makes the visitor aware that they are responsible if injured while riding the train. The small typographical ornament shaped like a tree on the reverse is often found on Colony imprints from before 1920.

The Colony issued hundreds of different postcards, some of which were sold in souvenir sets packaged in printed envelopes (figure 7). The eagle clutching the American flag on the front demonstrates the Israelites' strongly patriotic stance around the time of World War I. Unlike most souvenir postcard sets however, the House of David's contains dense theological information on the back. Those interested in understanding the complex faith, which is based on a highly

unique interpretation of scripture, might find answers to their questions on this envelope, or—even better—be inspired to speak with an Israelite missionary, or send for literature.

The Israelites were vegetarians; their *Vegetarian Cook Book* of 1912 is one of the first of its kind. It contains recipes for the food served at Eden Springs, as well as a discussion of the principles of vegetarianism from a scriptural standpoint. Many different menus survive from the vegetarian restaurants run by both the House of David and Mary's City of David. The example in figure 8 advertises the "mock meats" which were a staple of their cuisine. (Incidentally, the author has eaten the traditional mock meat recipe on numerous occasions at Mary's City of David as the filling in a sandwich topped with lettuce

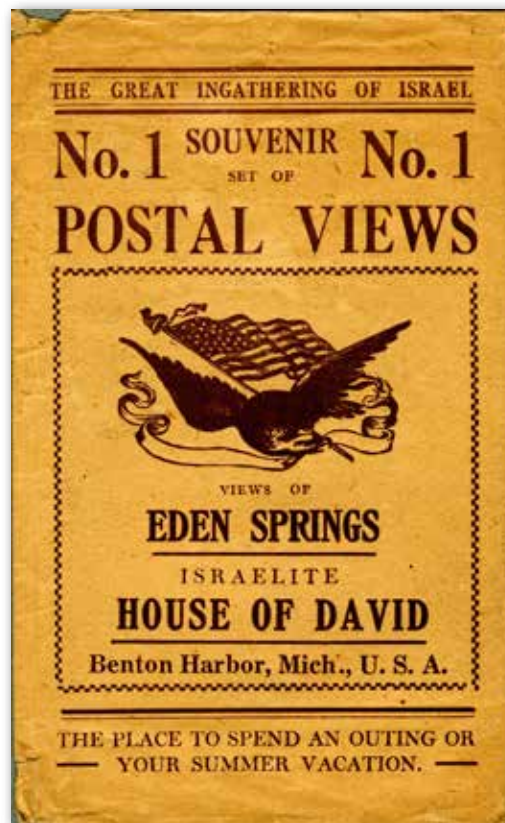


Figure 7. World War I packet of postcards.

EDEN SPRINGS
Hotel and Vegetarian
RESTAURANT

EDEN SPRINGS — HOUSE OF DAVID
Benton Harbor, Mich., U. S. A.
Beautiful Park — Well-Kept Grounds

AN IDEAL PLACE TO SPEND YOUR
SUMMER VACATION

UP-TO-DATE MOVING PICTURES
VEGETARIAN RESTAURANTS
POPULAR ATTRACTIONS
SEMI-PRO BALL GAMES
AVIARY AND ZOO
LADIES BAND
BOYS BAND
ORCHESTRA
MENS BAND
BOWLING ALLEYS
LARGE AUDITORIUM
FINE OPEN-AIR BATHING
EXCELLENT MUSICAL SERVICE
CONCERTS AFTERNOON & EVENING
COTTAGES AND FURNISHED ROOMS

HOUSE OF DAVID
Benton Harbor, Michigan, U. S. A.

GRAND AND ATTRACTIVE SERVICE

ESTABLISHED 1920

HOUSE OF DAVID RESTAURANT, BENTON HARBOR, MICHIGAN
EAGLE COTTAGE AND FURNISHED ROOMS

MENU

SOUPS
Vegetable Soup with Crackers 10

SPECIALS
Meat Meats, etc., with Sauces or Gravy 45
Vegetable Hash & Egg on Toast 45
Asparagus Tips 45
Mushrooms 60
Spinach any Style 35
Spaghetti Italiane 35

VEGETABLES
Stewed Tom 17 Boston Baked Beans 20 Fried Onions 20
Scotch Bro 17 Garden Peas 20 Stewed Tomatoes 20
String Beans 22 French Peas 22 Fried Onions 20
Young Cabbage in Season 17 Corn on Cobs in Season 17
Young Green in Season 17

POTATOES
Water Pot 11 Miss Boston 17 American Fried 11 Austrian 11
Roasted Potatoes 25 German Fried 25 Lyonnaise 20
Crisped Mashed Potatoes 10 Potatoes au Gratin 17
Potatoes O'Brien 25 Plain Baked 10

EGGS
Fried Egg 20 Scrambled 20 Baked Eggs 25 Eggs au Gratin 25
Omelette 25 Fried Egg 17 — or Battered Toast 11

OMILETTES
Plain 22 Tomato 28 Cheese 21 Scrambled 20 Apple 45
Beef 31 Omelette with Pineapple 42 Scrambled Omelette 25
French Omelette 25 Vegetarian Omelette 42 Macaroni Omelette 42
New Omelette & French Omelette 42 Macaroni Omelette 22
Omelette 30 Eden Springs Omelette & Scrambled Omelette 42

PANCAKES ETC.
French Pancake 11
Pancake Flattens with Butter 41
English Pancake with Mixed Lemons 41
Belgian Pancake with Crab-Apple Jelly 21

TOASTS
French Toast 14 Battered Toast 11 Cocoa Toast 40
Milk Toast 24 Plain Toast 11 with Butter 11
Homemade Bread & Butter 11 Cheese & Cucumber 25 Butter & Buns 10

MENU

SALADS
Cucumber Salad & 1/2 Mole 10 Egg & Potato Salad 25 Radishes 10
Belgian Salad & 1/2 Tomato 25 Potato Salad & 1/2 Vinegar 25
Asparagus Salad & Egg on Toast 10 Salad Cucumber 11
Stewed Tomatoes 11 Young Onions 10 Vegetable Salad 25
Stewed Cucumber & Russian Dressing 20 Plain Lettuce 15
Stewed Tomatoes & Russian Dressing 20 Russian Salad 25
Luscious Fruit Salad 30 Golden Fruit Salad 25
Tomato & Cucumber Salad with Macaroni Dressing 20

PICKLES
Spanish Pickles 11 Green Tomato Pickles 11 Spanish Onions 22
Pickled Beets 11 Pickled Onions 11 Pickled Cucumbers 11
Marined Cauliflowers 11 Plain Cabbage 25 Spanish Stuffed Onions 20
English Cheese-Cake Pickles 15 Mixed Pickles 11 Bean Onions 20

CAKES
Chocolate Layer Cake 17 Apple 11 Plain Cake 11 Assorted 20
Gourmet Layer Cake 11 Cakes 11

PIES
Apple Peach Berry Gr. Pie 4.00

Pie a la Mode 25

CHEESE
Toasted Cheese on Toast & Mashed Potatoes 30 Swiss Cheese 21
Which Butter on Mashed Potatoes 30 American 15
Golden Baked & Fried Egg 30 Brie 14 Potatoes 25
Luscious Cheese 25 Omelette 25

DESSERTS
Cucumber Fruit Salad 10 French Toast & 1/2 Mole 21 Stewed Onions 20
Vegetarian Fruit Salads 25 Flavored Fruit Cakes 10
Strawberry & Cream 25 Wild Raspberry 20

PRESERVES
Preserved Raspberries 20 Preserved Peaches 20 Preserved Potatoes 20
Preserved Crab Apples 20 Orange Marmalade 20
Preserved Cherries 25 Preserved Apples 20
Preserved Quinces 20 Preserved Apples 20
Grape Jelly 20 Cucumber Jelly 20 Orange Jelly 20
Apple Jelly 20 Quince Honey 20

HOT & COLD DRINKS
Coffee 11 — Brown 20 Potions Cooled 11 Tea 10 — in Pot 20
Cocoa in Cream 11 Sweet Milk 11 Hot Milk 15
Iced Buttermilk 10 Iced Tea 11 Lemonade 20

Figure 8. World War I menu for the vegetarian restaurant at Eden Springs.

HOUSE OF DAVID
U.S. No. 1
Concord GRAPES
Packed by
HOUSE OF DAVID VINEYARDS
BENTON HARBOR, MICH.
CONTENTS FOUR QUARTS

House of David
JELLIES AND JAMS

THERE IS A FLAVOR
TO SUIT YOUR
TASTE

"Made where the finest
fruits are grown"
St. Joseph, Michigan
PRESERVE DIVISION — LION BRAND '87

House of David
Michigan Male Haven
YELLOW FREESTONE PEACHES
MIXED FRUIT OF
MICHIGAN SEAS AND SHAPES
ON MEDIUM
SYRUP

Product... Freestone Peaches
Variety... Mich. Male Haven
Style... Mixed Fruit
Can Size... No. 2 1/2
Syrup... Medium

Original
Fresh Flavor

Serve these Peaches
just as they come from
the can. Delicious in
desserts.

Produced by **House of David** St. Joseph, Mich.
CONTENTS 1 LB. 13 OZ.

Figure 9. Two shipping box labels and a flyer for fruits and preserves.

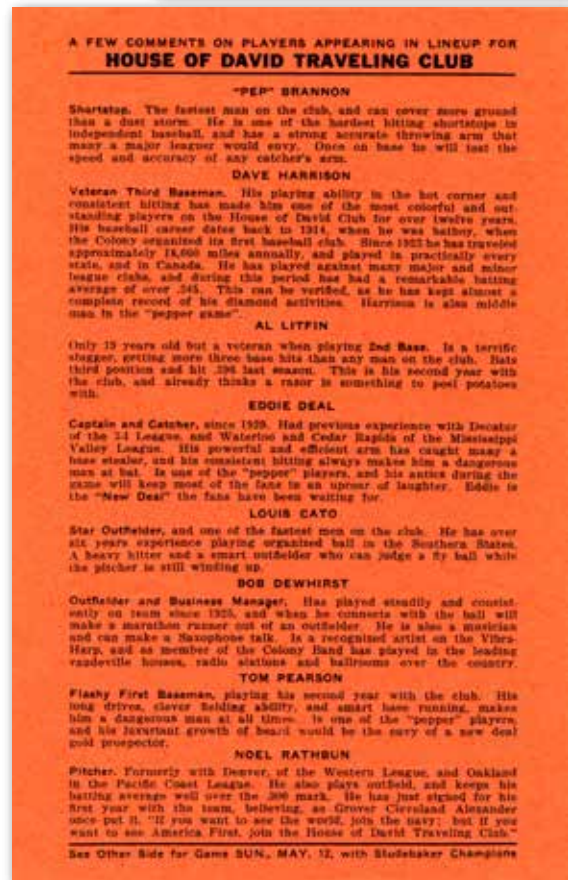
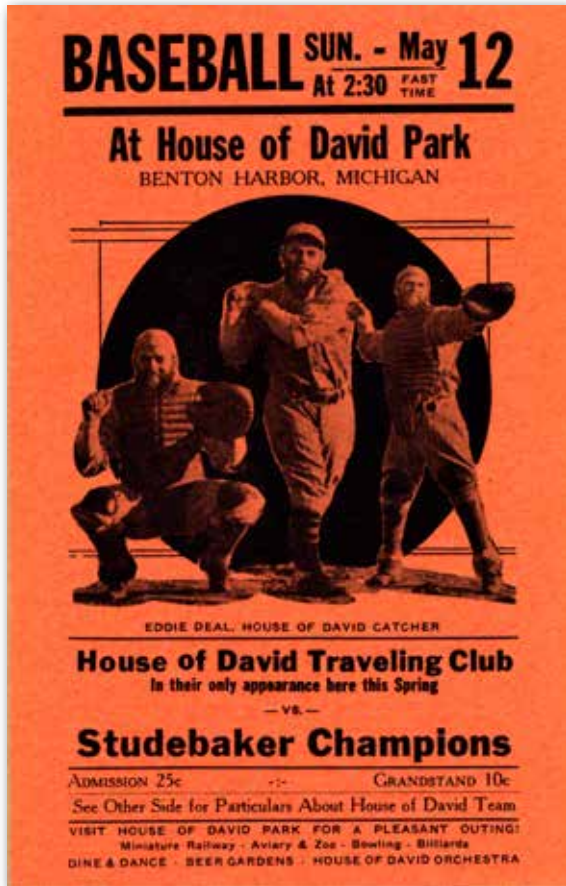
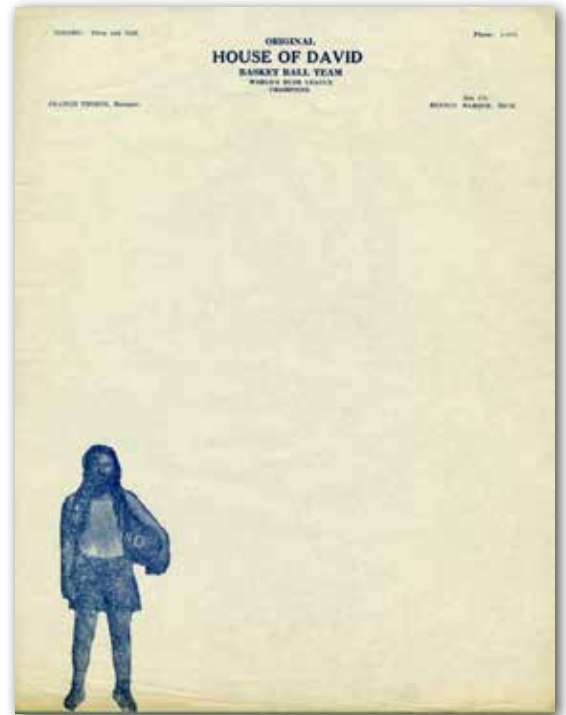
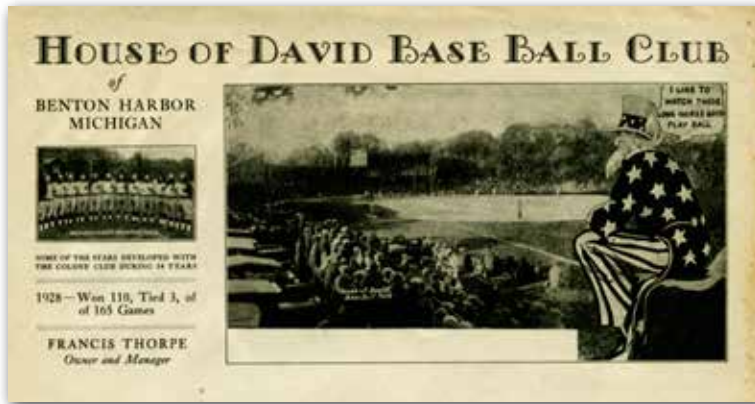


Figure 10. House of David sports: unused letterhead images for the baseball and basketball teams; flyer for a game at the House of David park.

and mayonnaise - delicious!) It is difficult to date this example, but the presence of the eagle and flag, as well as the patriotic color shift in the printing, suggest it dates to around the World War I period.

The House of David cultivated huge fruits crops as a part of their business operations. Southwestern Michigan is known as the “fruit belt,” and the Colony grew grapes, raspberries, peaches, apples, blueberries, and many other fruits and vegetables. In 1932 the House of David constructed the largest cold storage facility in the United States to provide the region with a centralized shipping

depot for fruits and vegetables. The House of David Preserve Department successfully marketed jellies, jams, canned peaches, grape juice, and soups. Labels from the preserve industry are rare. One large collection of materials acquired by Hamilton College had been stored in corrugated cardboard shipping boxes for House of David peaches, many of which still had a peach can label

attached to the exterior. Most of these were in wretched condition. A handful of them, however, were in good enough shape that a conservator was able to remove them from the boxes (which were moldy) and salvage examples for the ephemera collection at Hamilton. The example in figure 9 was preserved that way. The House of David did a tremendous mail order business for their preserves. The flyer, which probably dates to the 1940s or 1950s, is one of the more colorful examples of ephemera from the Colony.

Finally, no discussion of the House of David and its associated ephemera could end without looking at what the Colony were best known for: sports. The bearded Israelite baseball and basketball teams were a national sensation beginning in the 1910s. The House of David team, and subsequent “copycat” teams complete with beards, barnstormed around the nation. The Mary’s City of David team played in the first night game ever in Independence, Kansas, versus the Independence Producers (which the Israelites lost 9-1). Teams from both colonies played against the Negro League teams, and barnstormed with the Kansas City Monarchs during the 1930s. Famous Monarchs pitcher Satchel Paige even pitched for the Israelites on at least one occasion. Contrary to popular belief, Babe Ruth never played for the Israelites, though a press photo does exist of him in a fake beard, lampooning the team. Famous female athlete Babe Didrikson *did*, in fact, play for the Israelites in 1934. Player/manager Grover Cleveland Alexander, a former major league player and eventual hall of famer, managed this team. Many fans are familiar with the words “no pepper” painted on the fences at major league ballparks. This refers to the pepper game, a fast-paced display of acrobatic ball-handling skills between three players at close range. The House of David invented this routine and it was part of the show they put on whenever

Hamilton College in Clinton, New York, has worked with both Mary’s City of David, and the House of David, to build the largest collection of Israelite imprints, manuscripts, audio and visual materials, and ephemera, anywhere in the world. To view Hamilton College’s digital collection of materials from the community please visit: elib.hamilton.edu/hod. Hamilton’s Special Collections include a substantial gathering of primary and secondary source materials relating to other American Communal Societies: groups of people who have intentionally separated themselves from society in general and live according to a shared set of principles, whether religious or secular, in common ownership of property. Included is the M. Stephen Miller collection of Shaker material (see *The Ephemera Journal* Volume 16, Number 3, May 2014).

they played. Other antics included hiding the ball between one’s chin and beard, and then tagging out an unwary runner taking a lead off. The Israelites also used to steal bases, *in reverse*, getting a huge roar from the crowd while stealthily running from third back to second!

Figure 10 shows the letterhead for the team prior to the separation of the original House of David. Francis Thorpe, who was Mary Purnell’s right hand man, was also the team’s manager. The illustration shows the House of David ballpark at Benton Harbor, and an enthusiastic Uncle Sam saying “I like to watch those long haired boys play ball.” The flyer in dates from 1935 and features catcher Eddie Deal, who played for the team from 1929-1942 and managed them from 1936 onward. In their definitive book *The House of David Baseball Team* historians Joel Hawkins and Terry Bertolino quoted Deal as saying: “In critical situations, I liked to tell the batters what was coming. ‘Tell you what I’m going to do, a fastball, chest high, right down the middle. I want to see you get a base hit.’ The batter would back out and say catchers are all damn liars. I’d say ‘You couldn’t hit a fly in the ass with a screen door.’ The pitch would be a fastball right down the middle and they’d never expect it.” The Israelite teams continued to delight audiences until the mid-1950s when they disbanded.

Mary’s City of David also fielded basketball teams that traveled all over North America, even playing against a team of Native Americans in Alaska. They traveled to Europe with the Harlem Globetrotters in 1954. The second letterhead of figure 10 features a bearded, long-haired player, possibly Jesse Lee “Doc” Tally, who was also one of the originators of the pepper game in baseball.

The House of David and Mary’s City of David are both still active religious communities to this day. The House of David has recently carried out extensive restoration work on their major buildings. Mary’s City of David for many years have operated a museum, and welcome visitors to their site during the summer months. Both communities have websites: www.israelitehouseof david.com and www.maryscityofdavid.org

Christian Goodwillie

is immediate past President of the Communal Studies Association. He is Director and Curator of Special Collections at Hamilton College in Clinton, New York, and serves as Associate Editor of the Richard W. Couper Press. He was Curator of Collections at Hancock Shaker Village from 2001-2009. He has authored, co-authored, or edited eight books and a number of articles on the Shakers and other topics.



Rick Ring's Creative Fellowship Program

BY RICHARD J. RING

Ephemera/36 opened with a presentation from the Watkinson Library at Trinity College, Hartford, CT, "The Alchemy of Special Collections" by **Richard J. Ring**, Head Curator & Librarian who teaches undergraduate and graduate courses at the college, using special collections, including ephemera, as valuable bases and resources for research and other scholarly endeavors. Four former and present students described their personal journeys of discovery and their encounters with ephemera, which engaged them with human, creative and intellectual aspects of original, otherwise inaccessible source materials.

Mr. Ring spoke with passion about working with primary sources, which are increasingly considered a vital part of education – not just at the upper levels of colleges and universities but even at elementary and secondary schools, where exposure to and use of primary documents and artifacts can begin. He dismisses the so-called "death of the book" and all it represents in the face of the digital age, positing that because of the explosion of the *virtual* young people are even more intrigued by the *real* than ever before. He argues that "the idea of authenticity has a new power these days," when under-eighteens comprising one third of Americans have no concept of a world without the internet. Access to a global information network is changing the nature of society in diverse ways to profound degrees; it is most



Figure 1



Figure 2

certainly changing the nature of curatorship and the way ephemera is used to teach.

To Mr. Ring, the question becomes how do curators, librarians and educators "compete for attention against such a dizzying, glitzy, stimulating world?" He first turns to the items themselves, to uncover and unleash the "power to create that mental *spark* which can be kindled into fire inherent in the artifacts." As examples, he cites five pieces of ephemera from the Library's collections, seeking a "deeper, basic level as a human being making his way in the world, which is the mental ground water" which he is "trying to tap into with [his] students."

Figure 1: the oldest artefact in the Watkinson, a 4,000 year old Sumerian cuneiform clay tablet ca2230 BCE - a receipt for 20 bundles of sheepskins. Documents like these, numbering in the tens of thousands, have been excavated from sites in central Iraq for over a century, and reveal the workings of the government and the economy of that time.

An Alexander Pope subscription ticket (receipt), evidencing the way Pope marketed, sold and distributed his 1715 translation of Homer's *Iliad*.

Figure 2: an 1824 silk handkerchief, upon which an image was printed depicting William Penn agreeing to a treaty with the Delaware Indians, ca1684 (based on a 1771 painting and a 1775 engraving).

Figure 3: an 1850 prospectus of legal advice, for a book to be published by a 19th-century mainstream publisher, “Every Woman Her Own Lawyer,” subtitled “A Private Guide in All Matters of Law, Of Essential Interest to Women,” who “are beginning to be so universally recognized as competent to attend to all sorts of business matters which relate to themselves.”

Next, Mr. Ring addresses “how to fan the *spark* into flame,” creating “the conditions and *structures* to stage this *initial encounter*” and “then to nurture the *flame* until it can sustain itself” – wherein, “the alchemy happens.” The library’s old tomes and texts are likened to the alchemist’s old bottles and phials of experimental mixtures and elements. The most obvious structure of encounter is through his own courses on The World of Rare Books, New England Narratives and Museum & Library Exhibitions (as well as those taught by other faculty on Shakespeare, Victorian London, the World History of Wine, the Civil War, The Bible in History...), all of which use materials from the collections.

Then there is the more innovative structure of encounter that he implemented in 2011 which now boasts almost 30 alumni—a *Creative Fellowship Program* for undergraduates, to explore their varied talents or passions (as an artist, actor, music composer, photographer, videographer, writer, poet, blogger, computer whiz, website designer, calligrapher, engineer, entrepreneur, athlete, et cetera). Self-directed students are supported to explore the Watkinson collections, “to *encounter* an item or group of items that *spark* inspiration, and engage with that material to produce



Figure 3



something *new* ... based on or inspired by an item or collection in the Watkinson.”

Mr. Ring introduced the following of his students who generously made the trip to Old Greenwich (See image on previous page, from left):

Rachel Koladis, who put on an exhibition on etiquette guides and ephemera (including items from her own collection) for his exhibitions course in 2011; she also assists dance ephemera collector Marc Casslar in managing his collection;

Meghan Crandall, who mounted a show on so-called “Vinegar Valentines” for the same course in 2014;

Carsten Lohan, a former student in Ring’s “World of Rare Books” course who also recently engaged in an independent study under Ring’s supervision on Nathaniel Sheldon Wheaton, founding trustee and second president of Trinity College (1831-37) who in 1823 sailed to London to raise money for the founding and to purchase books for the library; and

Henry Minot, a Creative Fellow (Fall 2014) who researched the collections to produce a series of “letters” (using a quill pen) from a fictional member of a real Connecticut family, to his parents and to his wife, in 1777.

Mr. Ring’s commitment to this work has focused on offering his students exposure to an array of artifacts, creating programmatic structures to encourage and reward such encounters, and teaching the discipline that is required to understand and value the significance of these items and collections. He seeks to train a student “to think all the way around an object – about the why’s and when’s of its production, distribution and reception, and about its intended and unintended places in the history of human thought and endeavor.”

Mr. Ring attempts to go beyond training, to transcend the idea of a “laboratory of the humanities” which has been employed to describe rare book and manuscript collections since the 1950s, in order to achieve *alchemy*, a seemingly magical process which turns base elements into precious ones; to generate the elusive but elemental essence present when we encounter, acquire and work with the material. “Some describe it as a visceral connection to the past, others think of it as a sort of iconic power that is both inherent and invested in the artifacts we hold; and still other, less sympathetic souls characterize it as a kind of fetish.”

In conclusion, Mr. Ring quoted the following excerpt of the 1946 address, “The Validity of Antiquarianism,” given at Yale by Lawrence Wroth, Librarian of the John Carter Brown Library, upon the occasion of his being awarded an honorary doctorate:

“In the larger and truer sense, antiquarianism is the reconstruction of the record from its scattered and sometimes buried elements; it is the science of the past of the Earth and its occupants, of man and

The Watkinson Library, founded in 1858 and opened in 1866 as a public research library with 12,000 volumes in the Wadsworth Atheneum, was conveyed to Trinity College in Hartford Connecticut in 1952 and now serves as the special collections and archives of the Trinity College Library, supporting a liberal arts education. The Watkinson’s present holdings have grown to nearly 200,000 volumes, mainly rare books, manuscripts and special collections, which include thousands of pieces of ephemera (postcards, greeting cards, trade cards, ballad sheets, prints, maps, playbills, papers, broadsides, et cetera). The library is open for research Monday through Friday 10:00-4:30.

the things we have made with our hands, and of the clay tablets, manuscripts, and books in which we have embodied our thinking and doing ... to encounter these objects in the state in which they have been preserved is to establish reunion with their makers across the centuries. To study them in this state rather than in photographs or models gives the scholar that little acceleration of the heart-beat, the quickening of the inhalation, which lift him from prosaic levels to inspiration.”

Richard J. Ring, L.S. from Indiana University, was Reference & Acquisitions Librarian of the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University, and Special Collections Librarian at the Providence Public Library before his 2010 appointment as Head Curator & Librarian of the Watkinson Library at Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut.



Return to Sender: *Towards An Analytical History of Mail Art*

BY RENÉE H. REYNOLDS

In 1974, James Warren Felter curated the world's first exhibition featuring what would come to be known as *artists' stamps* or *artistamps*, a stamp-like medium that incorporates stylistics from officially endorsed stamps and mail-related media. This event began an initiative by like-minded artists to create, publish, and distribute their artistamps through a global network containing "culture workers" or "networkers" (Held, 2012) who were at one time practitioners of the art form and philatelists receiving the work of others as contributions to their own personal collections and achieves. Reaching its height in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the practice of mail art still continues today, although aided in greater part by the Internet. The Mail Art community during its rise was more than a group of artists creating fake stamps, posts, and kingdoms; it was an international movement operating beyond satire that sought to find connection among artists troubled by violence and war. I am particularly interested in the establishment of semiotic tropes (Elleström, 2012),

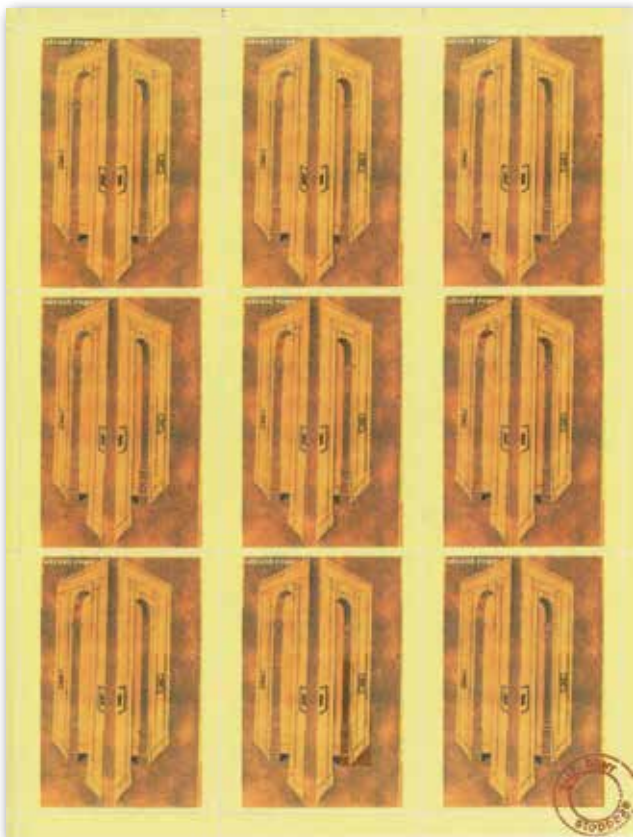


Figure 1. Afraid Rope by Russel Butler (aka. buZ blurr).



Figure 2. Ministry of Truth. Tom Kline and Harley, collaboration. (2005).

networked artistic identity, and the rhetorical footings of simultaneous pith and ambiguity within the Mail Art movement.

A Foundation in Resistance

Resistance artwork is no stranger to the global art scene, traversing geo-political and language boundaries in its insistence for the end of human suffering. It is no surprise that much art that would fall into this broad category is also oppositional to the standardized commercialization and commodification of the various media by the established art world. In an attempt to circumvent the authoritarianism of social, political, and art systems, some of these communities turned to hijacking established mediums that convey the influence of the state. Perhaps one of the subtler examples of state influence and one of the riper for this type of artistic appropriation is the postage stamp and, equally so, the accompanying rubber stamp marks and envelopes.

The “Inbred” Attribute of Vanguard Art

Perhaps most akin to street art in epigrammatic form in which they convey their message, artistamps seem to have ties to examples of early mail art, like *Correspondance*, a Belgian Surrealist serial produced from 1924-25, which Baetens and Kasper (2013) describe as “direct, anti-commercial, inbred, and visual.” This description of early mail art examples from the early part of the 20th century establishes a few important notions about vanguard art of this type—most notably that it is “inbred”—meaning that the artwork is circulated in virtual obscurity, lending concern to the notion that it is truly subversive in that it bypasses much of the mainstream public. However, paradoxically, this condition of mail art enables its departure from the economies of art by providing a ready-made reception of viewers without the necessity of relying upon the institutions the art itself resists. In other words, mail art does not need to be published through sanctioned authorities, as the artists themselves, from the very beginning of the movement in the early 1970s, were self-publishing.

The Need for an Analytical History of the Mail Art Movement

Within the sparse scholarship and documentation (Held, 2015; Gahlinger-Beaune & Bianchini, 1999; Welch, 1995) that help to construct the history of the Mail Art movement, there has been a focus on recording the history and charting the trajectory of the movement. More specifically, texts are interested in the ways that the history of the movement transfers to the medium’s use the contemporary movement within a digitized world (Cohen, 2006). The few scholarly sources focusing on this topic are mainly interested in establishing the basic premises of artistamps, leaving their larger theoretical potential untapped. What is missing from this conversation is an understanding of the contributions of the movement as a new medium of resistance rhetoric. Although it may be argued that the rise of the Internet and now social media led to the fading away of the Mail Art movement, this project contends that a second wave of alternative and potentially subversive art is poised upon the threshold as DIY maker-culture ethics pervade nearly every corner of the current resistance landscape. To this end, I question how the establishment of a more extensive history of the movement, along with an examination of the movement’s rhetorical premises, might yield more insight through archival research, interviewing, and ephemera study.

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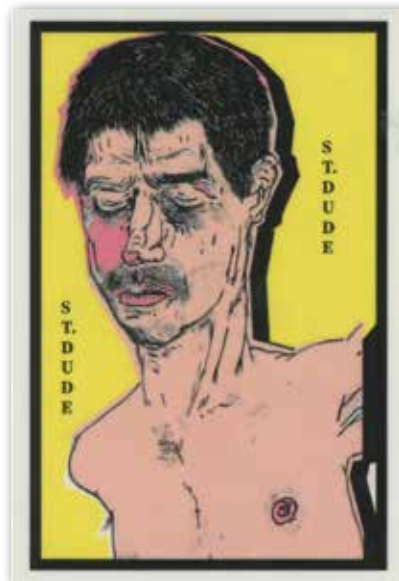


Figure 3. Saint Dude. Hamlet Mateo. (2011).

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Renée H. Reynolds holds a Ph.D. in Rhetoric, Composition and the Teaching of English from the University of Arizona. She has written on gaming culture, fan fiction, comics, and has presented on the Mail Art movement at the National Conference for Popular Culture Association. Dr. Reynolds is shown presenting a commentary on her exhibit at Ephemera/36 in March 2016, when she attended both the conference and the fair for the first time.

20th Century African American Ephemera

BY ELVIN MONTGOMERY

Black **history** ephemera (documenting things that really happened) is quite different from black memorabilia (stereotyped, usually derogatory images and products produced outside the African American community). For most of the 20th century (up to the 1960s) African Americans lived in separate, segregated communities and their social, civic, educational and religious lives were lived among and confined to other African Americans. So the ephemera produced by them and for them reflects their segregation from the mainstream of general American life. Magazines, photographs, handbills, posters, letters and documents, etc. produced from the African American point of view usually have a different message, information content and intention than those produced outside the African American community.

Some themes and concerns have been constant throughout the 20th century (religion and churches, music and entertainment, sports), but it is instructive to consider a chronological progression of other themes revealed in ephemera.

Early 20th Century: The general idea of UPLIFT (i.e. racial socioeconomic and cultural progress) was important, especially as a reaction to the degradation of slavery and post slavery oppression. Many organizations and colleges were active ephemera producers.

World War I: The focus then was on patriotism and the privilege of fighting for the nation and being included in the military. Blacks were proud of their ability to wear uniforms and serve the nation's military interests.

The 1920s, 1930s and early 1940s: The thrust of mass communication within and toward the African American community was often about urbanization (migration and escape to the north from the repressive, rural south), facing and combating color prejudice and cultural expression (e.g. the Harlem and new Negro renaissance). There was also a decidedly joyful celebration (by whites as well as blacks) of Negro popular culture in music, dance and visual arts. Thus, the jazz age swept the western world and international expressions of African American ways of speaking, acting and expressing thoughts became more and more popular. Since the WW I era, black entertainers, musicians and writers had been going to Europe and these expats influenced the socio-cultural atmosphere back home. Anti-lynching references were frequent. In the north, Harlem became an iconic place but every major city had a relatively privileged and successful leadership class.

The mid 1940s through the 1950s: World War II was the overriding event in the American and European national consciousness at this time. Military involvement



Figure 1. Photograph of a 1904 banquet in Washington, Missouri.



Figure 2. Photograph of a World War I Negro band.

became a symbol of inclusion into society and the mainstream. Many blacks were drafted or recruited into the armed forces. Themes related to: 'could or would the Negro fight for America' became widespread and the answer was decidedly yes. After the war, as with everyone else, African Americans avidly sought peacetime satisfactions (e.g. getting married, taking advantage of the GI bill, going to college and getting homes). Much ephemera reflects vocation, prosperity and upward mobility. Black colleges expanded greatly. The integration of the army led directly to the civil rights movement. Voting rights were a major concern. Opportunity was a frequently heard and seen theme. High achievers and celebrities were given a great deal of attention in paper and photographic productions.

The 1960s and Civil Rights: The 1960s brought a marked upsurge of interest (it could be called a movement) in a legal end to segregation and a pressing

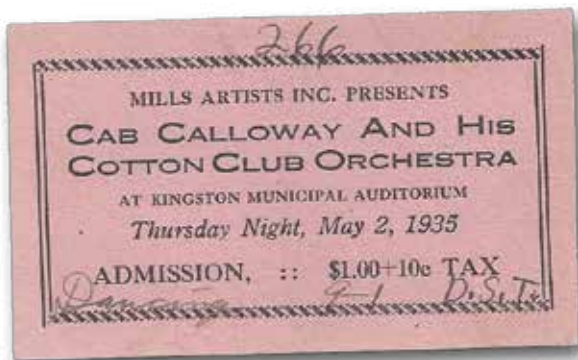


Figure 3. Admission ticket to a 1935 concert (with "Dancing 9-1" added in pencil) in Kingston NY. Cab Calloway's Jitterbug Party was a short film released that same year.

for civil rights and political enfranchisement in the South. Expressions of anger and rage at long years of mistreatment were frequently expressed in ephemera

along with the re-discovery of activist and militant black leaders of the past. There was much marching, mobilization of local African American communities and confrontation with local authorities and segregation era power structures. Later on, the movement turned to aggressive assertion of identity, Black power, the black arts movement and redefining Beauty and aesthetics (e.g. the Black is beautiful ideology). Often ephemera presented content related to the "First Black" theme in which the first African Americans

to become successful or prominent in specific areas or professions were highlighted. The impact of black cultural developments were much in view (e.g. R&B, fashion, cooking and various forms of partying). During the 1970s ephemeral production expressed assertive Africanic themes and identity symbols such as hair, garments and

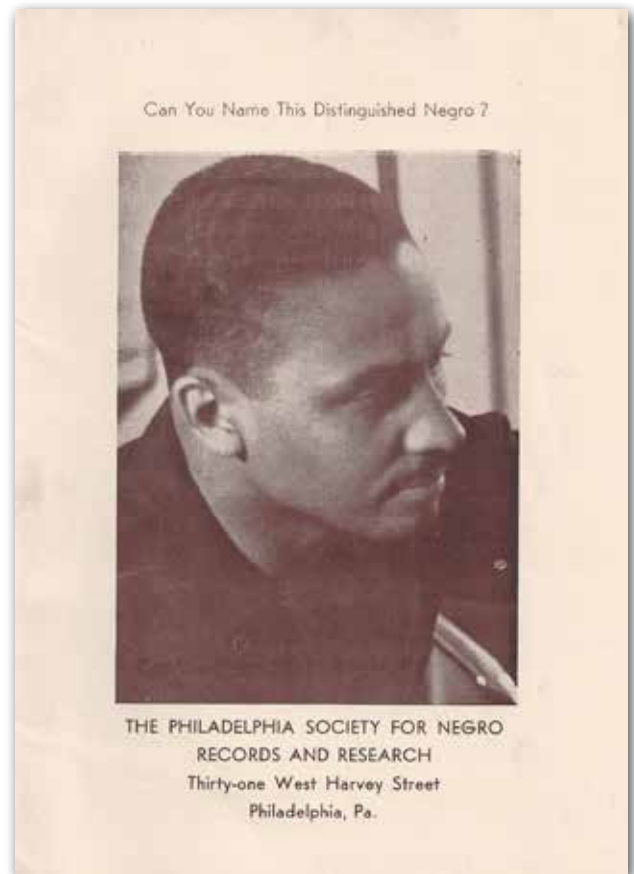


Figure 4. Raising consciousness by the Philadelphia Society for Negro Records and Research, founded in 1937: E. Simms Campbell (1906-1971) was a cartoonist whose artwork was in almost every issue of Esquire from 1933 to 1958.

Figure 5. Coverage of a 1950s fashion show in Harlem.

names. The black art movement produced a great deal of work focused on the liberation and identity theses of the time. Travel and lifestyle as well as organizational activities such as Greek letter conventions and new forms of entertainment that had previously been closed to blacks (e.g. bowling, skiing, etc.) became popular preoccupations for the middle and professional classes. Ephemera related to music and entertainment (ranging from radio handbills and concert programs to record covers and album inserts) was very prevalent in this era.

The Post-Civil Right Era:

Both successes and failures were prominently referred to in the ephemera of this period. Successful blacks and successful black causes were touted and celebrated.



Figure 6. 1980 issue of Powerman and Iron Fist comic, by Marvel, a series launched in 1978.

However, negative socio-economic events were also recognized in ephemera (e.g. anti-drug movements, ghettoization, poverty and crime). A significant interest in politics, education and business achievement could be observed in the ephemera of the time. African American slang and fashion were featured in many forms (especially advertising, entertainment and sports ephemera).

Later 20th Century and onward: The evolution of African American society and culture has continued and ephemera production and styles have kept pace. Basketball, politics and, of course, music and entertainment are obvious examples (notice the flood of advertising memorabilia related to hip hop).

Elvin Montgomery,

Ph.D., M.Phil., M.S. (all in Psychology) from Columbia University, has worked as a manager or consultant in both the private and non-profit sectors since 1970

and is a member of several professional groups including the Appraisers Association of America. He teaches Psychology at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice and the New York City College of Technology, both campuses of the City University of New York. He is shown talking with conferees after his presentation at Ephemera/36.



1941 Diversity Ticket

BY CLAUDE JOHNSON

At first glance, this unused ticket for a basketball event that features four teams playing in celebration of the birthday of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt to benefit the Infantile Paralysis Fund seems like an “ordinary” rare piece of ephemera. Actually, it is extraordinary, for several reasons.

First, it is a ticket for a doubleheader game, which means that two games were played instead of just one. Four of the country’s leading professional basketball teams participated. What makes it unique is the racial and ethnic diversity of the organizations involved.

The first squad listed is an all-black professional barnstorming team from Harlem called the New York Renaissance Big Five, whose nickname was the “Rens.” Formed in 1923, they were America’s first all-black, black-owned, fully professional basketball team and were arguably last century’s most dominant hoops squad, regardless of race. Through 1948, the Rens won 2,588 of 3,117 games – a staggering winning percentage of 83% sustained over a 25-year period. This was all the more remarkable considering that during that time, Jim Crow racial segregation policies barring them from most hotels meant they had to find private residences in which to stay, which required a huge logistical city-by-city pre-planning effort as an added burden over the course of 150+ games a season.

“To this day, I have never seen a team play better team basketball,” said legendary coach and Hall of Fame member John Wooden – who faced the barnstorming Rens often during the mid-1930s while a player with the Indianapolis Kautskys and other all-white pro basketball teams in Indiana – in a *USA Today* interview in 2000. “They had great athletes, but they weren’t as impressive as their team play.

The way they handled and passed the ball was just amazing to me then, and I believe it would be today.”

The Rens ushered in the Harlem Renaissance period, smashed the color barrier in pro basketball, and helped pave the way for the Civil Rights Movement. Two years earlier, in 1939, they had won the inaugural World Championship of Professional Basketball, an invitation-only tournament, defeating the country’s ten best white teams. So the New York Rens, who played most of their games on the road, were without question the marquee participant on this vintage ticket.

The Philadelphia SPHAs (short for South Philadelphia Hebrew Association) were America’s greatest all-Jewish basketball team. Organized in 1918, they were considered one of the best squads in the country and were a leading attraction.

The SPHAs had dominated the American Basketball League during the mid-1930s, capturing three championship titles in a five-year span, and they traveled throughout the Midwest during breaks in their schedule and in the off-season. Even during the rise of Nazism and anti-Semitism, the SPHAs wore Star of David patches on their jerseys, and even into German-American cities like Oshkosh, Wisconsin. “We got into fights, but we always got out of it,” said SPHAs player Jerry Fleishman, who played with the team during World War II. “We were proud to represent the Jews,” he said. “We became life friends with the basketball players who played with us and against us.”¹

The Akron Firestones, also known as the Non-Skids, were an all-white team organized in the early 1930s by the Firestone Tire and Rubber Company to promote the company’s brand and its newest road-gripping tire. Their

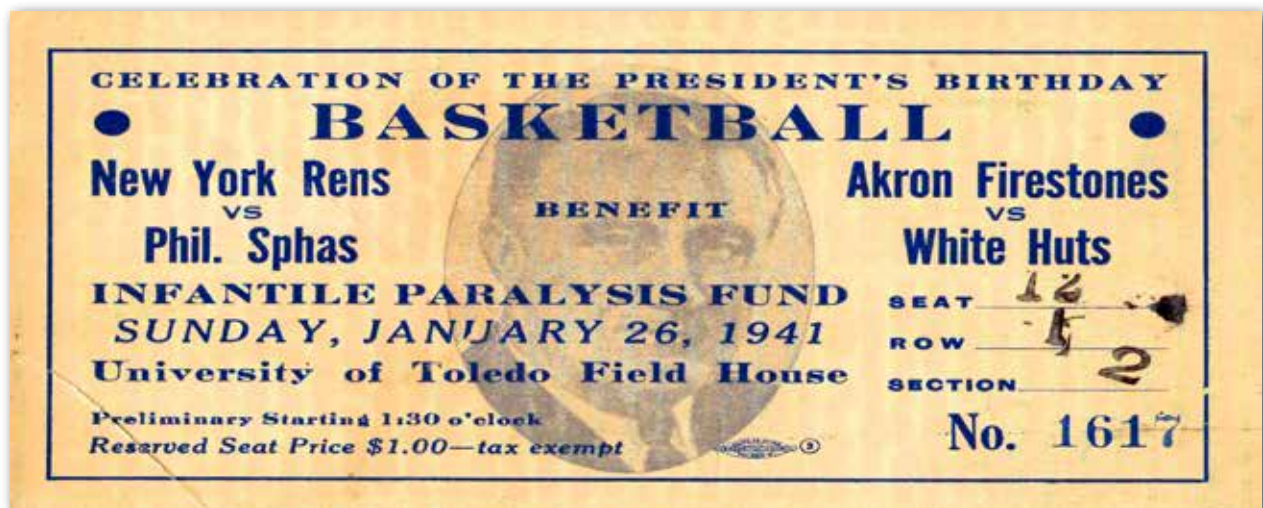


Figure 1. Unused, numbered, ticket for basketball games (New York Rens vs Philadelphia SPHAs and Akron Firestones vs Toledo White Huts) in celebration of Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s birthday and as a fundraiser for the Infantile Paralysis Fund, Sunday, January 26, 1941, at the University of Toledo Field House. 2 inches by 3.5 inches, printed on medium weight cardboard stock with a background image of the President, and hand-stamped for the seat, row, and section.

The Black Fives Foundation is a 501(c)3 public charity whose mission is to preserve, promote, and teach the pre-1950 history of African-Americans in basketball while honoring its pioneers and their descendants. Its founder and executive director, Claude Johnson, was guest curator of "The Black Fives," a museum exhibition at the New-York Historical Society (March-July 2014). The concourse of the Barclays Center, home of the NBA's Brooklyn Nets, features a permanently-installed compilation, provided by the Black Fives Foundation, of vintage Brooklyn-related African American basketball images. www.blackfives.org



early rosters comprised of company employees. Based in Akron, Ohio, the firm's headquarters, the Firestones were one of the founding members of the Midwest Basketball Conference, which was later reorganized into the National Basketball League, a predecessor to the National Basketball Association. Coming into this doubleheader, they had won the previous two NBL championship titles, in 1939 and 1940. Unfortunately, the 1940-41 season would be the team's last.

The Toledo White Huts debuted in 1939 and were run by a local businessman and sports promoter named Sidney Goldberg. Goldberg partnered with a Toledo-area chain of hamburger restaurants called White Hut to acquire financial backing for the team, seeking to join the National Basketball League. They traveled and played throughout the Midwest against barnstorming pro and semi-pro squads.

The team's biggest attractions were local heroes and University of Toledo graduates Chuck Chuckovits and Bill Jones, who brought basketball fame to the city by starring on the college's first-ever nationally-ranked teams. Chuckovits, a 1938 and 1939 All-American, was an early innovator of the one-handed set shot, which, though highly effective, was considered unorthodox at the time. "Some of the high school coaches around here wouldn't let their kids come out to watch us play," Chuckovits remembered later, "because I was throwing one-handers."² Jones was an African American player who had led local all-black Woodward High School to back-to-back city championships in 1929 and 1930. Though his inclusion on the White Huts was a racial breakthrough at the time, Jones took it in stride. "I did not have any problems with fans, teammates or opponents," he said in a 2001 interview. "Integration was not a big deal because I had already gone through it at the University of Toledo."³

This was an electrifying period for basketball in America. But there was another reason why this amazing doubleheader was highly anticipated. This event was

scheduled in celebration of the birthday of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Its stated purpose was to raise money for the infantile paralysis fund, a predecessor to today's March of Dimes, which was founded in 1938 by FDR to combat polio. FDR himself was a well-known victim of polio, having been diagnosed with the disease in 1921, which left him confined to a wheelchair.

The staging of fundraising events during the week preceding FDR's birthday (January 30) became a tradition during the year the Infantile Paralysis Fund was originally organized. It began as a nationwide fundraising campaign that included the sale of merchandise, special features in motion pictures and on radio, and a variety of events where a portion of the ticket revenues were contributed to the cause. A glamorous, celebrity-filled annual President's Birthday Ball capped the week off.

This campaign was so successful that, during its inaugural year, thousands of individuals sent letters to the White House, many of which included small amounts of money. "Yesterday between forty and fifty thousand letters came to the mail room of the White House," Roosevelt said, in a weekly radio address. "Today an even greater number — how many I cannot tell you — for we can only estimate the actual count by counting the mail bags; in all the envelopes are dimes and quarters and even dollar bills — gifts from grown-ups and children — mostly from children who want to help other children get well."⁴

This vintage ticket was for admittance into what is believed to have been the first basketball-related fundraiser associated with the famous charity effort.

Endnotes

¹ As cited by Douglas Stark in *The SPHAs* (2011, Temple University Press: Philadelphia)

² Peterson, Bob. *Cages to Jumpshots*.

³ Toledo Blade, <http://www.toledoblade.com/Opinion/2001/02/23/Woodward-UT-star-Jones-earns-special-honors.html>

⁴ Roosevelt, Franklin D. (January 30, 1938). «The President's Birthday Message». *Disability History Museum*. National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis.

Claude Johnson, an author and historian, is founder and executive director of the Black Fives Foundation. His first book, *Black Fives: The*



Alpha Physical Culture Club (2012), is the non-fiction account of a pioneering early-1900s Harlem-based African American basketball team. Born in Vienna, Austria, Johnson's father is African American from the South Side of Chicago, and his mother was German from the Römerstadt section of Frankfurt am Main. He is a former trustee of the Greenwich Public Library, and lives with his wife and their three sons in Greenwich, Connecticut.

The Illusion of Nineteenth-Century Advertising: *A Tale of Two Classes*

BY DONALD ZALDIN

History is peculiar to the story of human identity, a communal accounting for the small worlds of individual experience: common ground, from or upon which individuals might create, build, or express themselves. But, a narrative serving a particular community might, while purposefully inclusive of some, be exclusive of others – as in us/them, friend/foe. The Ephemera Society of America is uniquely placed to be responsible for and responsive to the history of daily living. But we must be critical of the limitations of our points of view according to the material we study. Understanding the limitations of the kinds of evidence upon which we individually fasten our conclusions not only strengthens the bricks but also comports with the greater edifice – the Tower of Babel – of the human story.

—Robert Dalton Harris.

Most nineteenth-century advertising trade cards and decorative lithographs portray a cultural ideal of what Margaret Visser terms a society's "aims and fantasies,"¹ depicting the benefits and beneficiaries of the technological and social change wrought by the Industrial Revolution. Virtually unrepresented are the burdens of the latest mechanical processes and those who bore them, creating the illusion of only one, not two, classes of American and British Victorians.

In the nineteenth century, commerce in Britain and America was transformed in significant ways as a result of the confluence of five virtually contemporaneous developments: the industrial revolution; a population shift from the country to the city; the creation of a middle class; the new printing process of color lithography; and the creation of marketing principles and advertising techniques.

In the early to mid-nineteenth century, the industrial revolution's advances in science and technology transformed the individual-oriented, subsistence economy into a collective one of mass-production. This resulted in a shift in demographics from rural to urban, with a concomitant restructuring of society and the nature of family life: the first era of consumerism.

In both countries, a nascent middle class emerged with disposable income to spend on consumer goods they could no longer self-produce, in the form of never-before-conceived-of food products, ready-made clothing, and patent medicines, all created in the burgeoning, smoke-belching manufactories. [Figure 1].

By the mid-nineteenth century, much of Victorian



Figure 1. Chromolithographed trade card for Van Houten's Cocoa, copyright 1892.

advertising was conveyed through chromolithography, a process which was then as revolutionary to the world of the printing arts as industrialization was to the world economy and social structure. Chromolithographed advertising was distributed to existing and potential customers at point of sale, functioning as road maps that led them to advertisers, establishing their brands, and promoting their goods and services. Economic Darwinism resulted, in part through the evolution of advertising, offering consumers a choice between competing manufacturers and a wide variety of products. The imagery of fine art was adapted to commercial art to convey authority, availability, and quality of whatever was being purveyed, proving the 1771 maxim



Figure 2. 1880s trade card promoting tinned fish (American Sardine Co.; Union Fish Co.; Royal Brand lobster, mackerel, and sardines) chromolithographed by Schmidt & Co. of New York.

of American printer and editor, John Dunlap: “It pays to advertise.”²

This five-part Victorian “perfect storm” led, in many respects, to a better world, illustrated in ephemera such as advertising trade cards, magazine and newspaper advertisements, pamphlets, boxes, tins and bottles - beckoning and enticing the new, urban consumer society [Figure 2].

Nathaniel Currier and then Currier & Ives portrayed and mass-marketed a wide variety of single-stone, hand-colored lithographs on almost every aspect of American history and life, current events and popular culture. Many of these prints idealized rural and urban life, and heralded the century’s technological progress and material success, prompting the company to advertise itself as “Printmakers to the American People.” The company’s nineteenth-century *ad hoc* “democratic vistas” provide a graphic, visual record of the country’s social history of that era, sometimes depicting existing trends and sometimes shaping them by depicting the young nation’s aims and fantasies.

Companies from many countries boasted the new processes and products in trade exhibitions and world fairs (London in 1851, Philadelphia in 1876, and Chicago in 1893), at which advertising trade cards were mass-produced and distributed at the numerous exhibit booths, later forming the bases of the great institutional advertising trade card collections in Britain and America.³

Advertising trade card images present a visual smorgasbord of affluent consumers enjoying a prosperous lifestyle [Figure 3]. Societal ideals were exemplified by the lovely, family scenes of father, mother, young children, baby and dog in well-appointed homes and settings [Figure 4]. Cards often depicted the factories where products were processed and packaged, and featured the belching smokestacks of the industrial age (which represented progress rather than pollution as they do today) [Figure 5], as well as civilized assembly lines of a well-dressed and willing labor force of men, women and children.

The first commercially produced Christmas card [Figure 6] was commissioned by Londoner Sir Henry Cole in 1843. The layout and artwork by John Callcott Horsley showcases a central panel with three generations of a well-to-do family raising a toast to the card’s recipient, at a time of the year “when Want is keenly felt, and Abundance rejoices,” as Charles Dickens described Christmas.⁴ Both side panels portray scenes of charity, with food and clothing being given to the poor. While this inclusion acknowledged members of the lower classes with some sympathy, to most beneficiaries of the scientific and technological “progress of the century,” [Figure 7] those unfortunates neither mattered nor even figured into the “picture,” living their hardscrabble lives at the fringes of society.

A search for advertising trade card imagery of contrasting scenes, depicting the lower-class “have-nots” who bore



Figure 3. 1878 chromolithographed trade card for Huntley & Palmers Biscuits, of Reading, England.

the brunt of the century's technological innovations, was largely unproductive. Evidence in this printed art form of the dangerous factory conditions and overcrowded, unsanitary living conditions of the lower ranks of Victorian society was conspicuous by its absence. This is, of course, not at all surprising, as Victorian advertisers were in the business of selling products they manufactured and services they provided, for profit – which they did by depicting the prosperity of the gilded age, not the poverty and misery which existed at its lower levels. And, in any case, the working and non-working poor could not have afforded the goods and services offered via the increasingly popular use of advertising trade cards. The socio-economic underclass – which some social historians have labeled the “other Victorians,” many of whom suffered from privation, illiteracy, poor health, and hunger – was virtually invisible.

However, images of this nature do exist in the form of books, magazines, journals and letters, and in the photographic history of the period.

In 1845, Friedrich Engels published *The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844*. That same year, Benjamin Disraeli penned the second of his three Young England novels, *Sybil, or the Two Nations*, in which he traced the plight of the working classes of England. The Tory idealist weighed in on the “Condition of England Question,” revealing the growing discrepancy between rich and poor created by the infamous Victorian double standard of exploiting the lower classes in order to ensure Britain's success as a world economic power. Disraeli confronted the reality of industrialization and exposed the darker side of England's prosperity, achieved by doling out poor

wages and imposing long working hours spent in unsafe working conditions, especially in urban settings. He denounced the “two nation divide,” in which there existed “two nations between whom there is no intercourse and no sympathy; who are ignorant of each other's habits, thoughts and feelings, as if they were ... inhabitants of different planets; who are formed by different breeding ... and are not governed by the same laws ... the rich and the poor.” By doing so, Disraeli made an impact on contemporary public opinion, although he abandoned his outspoken role upon becoming Prime Minister, shifting

his priority and focus to the “Imperial Question.”

In the preface to her 1848 novel, *Mary Barton*, Elizabeth Gaskell reflected on “the unhappy state of things” in Victorian England, and wrote of her “deep sympathy with the care-worn men, who looked as if doomed to struggle through their lives in strange alternations between work and want.” The author set out to highlight the divisions ‘between the employers and the employed,’ speaking out for those who worked in the appalling conditions of the factory, struggling to feed their families and protect their children from disease and death. In the same year, in her private correspondence, Charlotte Brontë wrote about a pretty village in the south of England, “so different from our northern congregations of smoke-dark houses clustered round their soot-vomiting mills.” But these writers, though



Figure 4. 1868 hand-colored lithograph by Currier & Ives, *The Four Seasons of Life, Middle Age: “The Season of Strength.”*

honest and sympathetic in their literary representations of working-class hardship, were moderate in the remedial action they advocated and cautioned against radical change.

English social researcher Henry Mayhew went further, publishing numerous newspaper articles in the 1840s and later in book form of his studies and interviews with a gamut of beggars, street-entertainers, market traders, prostitutes, laborers, sweatshop workers, even down to the “mudlarks” — men, women, and children who searched the stinking mud on the banks of the River Thames for items of value such as copper nails, bits of coal and iron, bones, wood, and washed-up trinkets — and the “pure-finders,” who gathered dog feces to sell to tanners. Mayhew described their clothes, how and where they lived, their entertainments and customs, and made detailed estimates of the numbers and incomes of those practicing each trade, demonstrating how peripheral and precarious were the lives of so many in what, at that time, was the richest city in the world. The reformer/author published the results of over four years of first-hand research in his 1851 opus, *London Labour and the London Poor*, a “Cyclopedia of the Condition and Earnings of Those that will Work, Those that cannot Work, and Those that will not Work.” Although some of the London street traders took offence at what Mayhew had written about them, Mayhew’s published research stimulated public awareness and discussion and effected a measure of political reform to address the plight of the working and non-working poor, advancing his status as one of the early investigative journalists.

Of particular concern to men and women of conscience and advocates for social reform was the urban problem

of drunkenness of the working man, who squandered his wages on gin, wine, and beer, and once addicted, spiraled downwards, taking his wife and children with him, as depicted in the 1846 Currier lithograph, *The Drunkard’s Progress* [Figure 8]. English philanthropist and social researcher Charles Booth coined the terms “line of poverty,” living “in poverty” and those “in comfort.” Men, women and children who lived below this line commonly lived in communal workhouses on both sides of the Atlantic.

Samuel Johnson said of London that “to have a just notion of its magnitude, you must not be satisfied with seeing its great streets and squares, but must survey the innumerable little lanes and courts. It is ... in the multiplicity of human habitations which are crowded together, that the wonderful immensity of London consists.” John Thomson was a pioneering Scottish photographer and geographer who traveled to the Far East and documented its peoples, landscapes, and artifacts for an entire decade. Upon his return home to England in 1872, he renewed his acquaintance with radical journalist Adolphe Smith, a friend and colleague at the Royal Geographical Society. They collaborated in producing a monthly magazine, *Street Life in London*, in 1876-1877, documenting in photographs and text the lives of the street people of London, and in the process established social commentary photography as an early type of photojournalism. Their series of photographs was published in 1878 in book form of the same name, with text by Smith and photography by Thomson. The latter’s pioneering work as a “street-photographer,” documenting



Figure 5. ca1900 chromolithographed trade card for H.J. Heinz Company, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

continued from page 23

the social conditions he found there, enhanced his legacy as an accomplished photographer in the more traditional areas of landscapes, portraiture and architecture.

Jacob Riis was a Danish-American social reformer and newspaper journalist who wrote about the plight of the impoverished in New York City. For greater effect, in the 1880s he endeavored to demonstrate the squalor of that city's streets and tenements more vividly than he could express in words. When sketching failed, he tried photography

but that did not capture living conditions in the dark residential interiors. After flash photography was invented in 1887, Riis and his crew photographed both the exteriors and interiors of the city's slums, capturing on film the worst elements of New York's streets, tenement apartments and drinking dives, and the hardships of life amongst them – which new genre was termed “exposure journalism and photography.” Riis's first report was published in the daily newspaper the *New York Evening Sun* on February 12, 1888. The article, with accompanying images, was described as the foundation



Figure 6. 1843 lithographed Christmas card, “published at Summerly's Home Treasury Office” [Sir Henry Cole's pseudonym was Felix Summerly – actual publisher, Joseph Cundall of New Bond Street] printed by Jobbins of Warwick Court, Holborn, London, and hand-colored by Mason.

for a lecture called “The Other Half: How it Lives and Dies in New York” to give at church and Sunday school exhibitions, and the like. It was later expanded and published in 1890 in book form, titled, *How the Other Half Lives: Studies Among the Tenements of New York*.

Lewis Hine was an American sociologist and teacher who encouraged his students to use photography for educational purposes. He took his New York students to Ellis Island, taking hundreds of plates between 1904 and 1909 of the thousands of impoverished immigrants arriving each day, using these examples of documentary photography as a tool for social reform.

Examinations of period photographs of these lower class locales in Britain [Figure 9] and in America [Figure 10] reveal overcrowded, bustling city streets, home to the working poor, who toiled for long hours in less than ideal conditions for minimal wages, amid ever-present poverty, crime, drunkenness and disease. Images include down-and-out men and women, and desperate and destitute children, many of them neglected, abandoned or orphaned and forced to live in unsafe and unsanitary living quarters or on the street.

Nineteenth-century novelist and social reformer Charles Dickens was the “first author to describe



Figure 7. 1876 lithograph by Currier & Ives, *The Progress of the Century*. The lightning steam press. The electric telegraph. The locomotive. The steamboat. [Library of Congress]



Figure 8. 1846 hand-colored lithograph by N. Currier, *The Drunkard's Progress*. From the first glass to the grave.

the modern city of the nineteenth century and its profound impact on society, and, in particular, on everyday people.”⁵ The list of subjects on which Dickens wrote so graphically and passionately supports his place in history as the most significant chronicler of city life and his unofficial title of London’s ‘special correspondent for posterity.’ His novels were “like a giant atlas in which the metropolis has been imaginatively surveyed and mapped.”⁶ In his works, Dickens confronted the depths of privation, hardship, loss, disease and misery suffered by the poor. He wrote *A Christmas Carol* in 1843 with the aim of “opening the hearts of the prosperous and powerful towards the poor and powerless” by conveying the scale of the national problem without losing contact with individual lives.

In Dickens’s magazines and novels, one finds the great social issues of the times as recurring themes. Poverty, squalid living conditions, and overcrowding are common backdrops to such novels as *David Copperfield*, *Oliver Twist*, and *A Christmas Carol*. Focal points include the debtors’ prison in *Little Dorrit* and the workhouse in *Oliver Twist*. Criminal activity is epitomized by the likes of Fagin, the Artful Dodger, and the gang of youthful pickpockets in *Oliver Twist*, and in the opium dens of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*. Prostitution is featured in the character of Nancy in *Oliver Twist*. Child labour practices are highlighted in *Nicholas Nickleby* with the abuse of Smike and the high incidence of child mortality in *The Old Curiosity Shop* with the death of 13-year old Nell Trent. Ebenezer Scrooge weighs in on the issue of prisons by dismissing them in *A Christmas Carol*, and Pip tours Newgate Prison in *Great Expectations*. Dickens tackled all of these by-products of industrialization in his mission to effect reforms to alleviate the cruel conditions

that he believed were unjustly borne by the lower classes. Numerous forms of Dickens-related ephemera were produced in the late 1800s, including advertising trade cards, postcards, and tin signs. However, they generally depicted the colorful and eccentric characters of his novels rather than the victims of the injustices he described.

To borrow the opening quote from *A Tale of Two Cities*, Dickens’s 1859 novel about the French Revolution, the social history of Victorian England and America is really a “tale of two classes,” through whose prism are reflected the momentous technological and social changes of the second half of the nineteenth century, shaped

by the confluence of the industrial revolution and the advent of lithography and advertising:



Figure 9. ca1900 photograph by Quaker school superintendent Horace Warner of conditions in Spitalfields, London. [Library of Congress]



Figure 10. ca1900 anonymous photograph of conditions on the streets of New York City. [Library of Congress]

It was the best of times, It was the worst of times,
 It was the age of wisdom, It was the age of foolishness,
 It was the epoch of belief, It was the epoch of incredulity,
 It was the season of Light, It was the season of Darkness,
 We had everything before us, We had nothing before us,
 We were all going direct to Heaven, We were all going
 direct the other way.

A comparison of mid- to late-Victorian advertising trade cards and lithographs with the historical record of that time captured in print and photography discloses that the stark and inhumane images described in the written word and portrayed in photographic images of the unfortunate and underprivileged lower classes are virtually absent in nineteenth-century advertising ephemera that almost unfailingly depicts the privileged upper and middle classes. Such illustration of the “aims and fantasies” of a better life belies the harsher reality of the unavailability to the bottom quarter of the population of the promises made to society as a whole.

An “illusion” is defined as “a deception which produces a false or misleading impression of reality.” The inference implicit in Victorian advertising trade cards and prints that both upper and lower class society could take advantage of the new products being purveyed in advertisements of the time was no more than exactly that – an illusion – which misrepresents and distorts the reality of that period in Britain, Western Europe and North America of one nation, one class – the fortunate “haves”, but not the “have-nots” of nineteenth-century society. Historians are indebted to those writers and photographers whose works have preserved a place in history of the “other Victorians” who were not represented in traditional forms of ephemera of that period of great change and progress.

Endnotes

¹ Margaret Visser (b. 1940), Canadian author, social anthropologist, historian, and modern-day mythologist, from her article, ‘First, shoot two wild boar’, *Saturday Night*, vol. 108, issue 6 (Jul/Aug 1992), p. 27.

² John Dunlap was born in 1747 in Northern Ireland and emigrated to the U.S. when he was ten years old. He became a Philadelphia bookseller and printer of sermons, broadsides and handbills, and in 1771, at the age of 24, founded and published the weekly *Pennsylvania Packet*, or *General Advertiser*, which became the first daily newspaper in the United States. He became the official printer to the Continental Congress and was responsible for printing “The American Declaration of Independence”, which was adopted in 1776.

³ These include the Banks and Heal Collections at the British Museum,

the Bodleian Library’s John Johnson Collection, the Jefferson Burdick Collection at New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Bella Landauer Collection at the New York Historical Society.

⁴ See Thomas Nelson “Pease’s Great Variety Store and America’s First Christmas Card” (*The Ephemera Journal* Vol. 17 No. 2 January 2015) for similar holiday iconography.

⁵ English journalist, essayist, and biographer Walter Bagehot (1826–77) considered Charles Dickens to be the pre-eminent novelist of nineteenth-century urban modernity in general and London life in particular. In 1858, he observed that Dickens’ “genius” was especially “suited to the delineation of city life”.

⁶ Alex Werner, Head of History Collections at the Museum of London and lead curator of its exhibition “Dickens and London” (mounted in 2012, the centenary of his birth) in its exhibition guide, which examined Dickens’ legacy.

Donald Zaldin, co-founder of The Ephemera Society of Canada, serves on the Board of The Ephemera Society of America. He is an avid Sherlockian and collects the Dionne Quintuplets. Images are from the Barbara Rusch Collection, unless otherwise attributed. This article is based on a presentation at the 2014 Ephemera Society conference “Food and Drink - From Field to Table,” and a first version was published in *The Ephemera*, quarterly journal of the Ephemera Society (UK).



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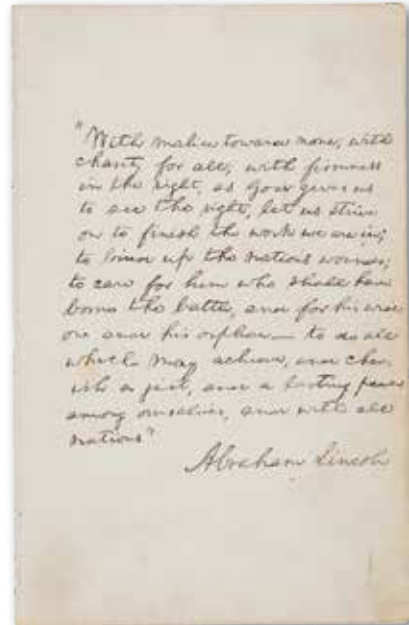
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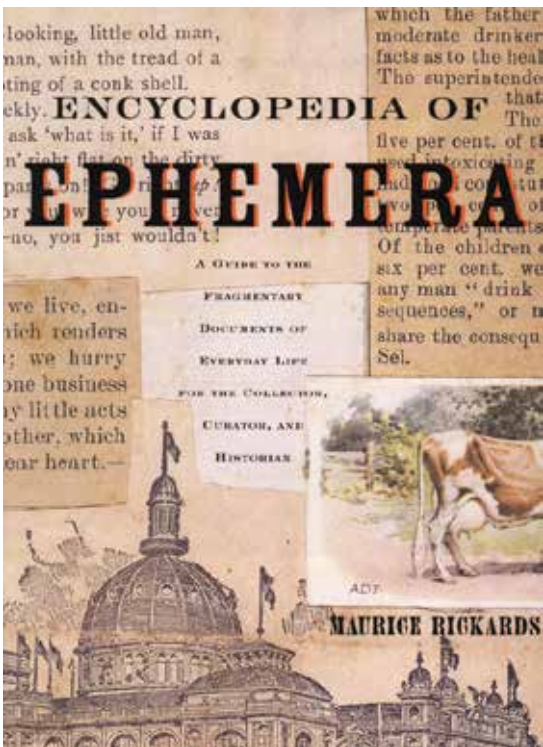
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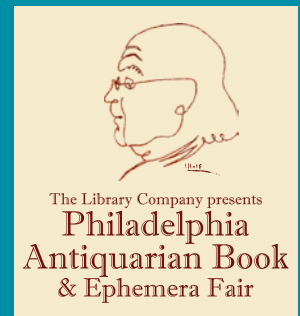
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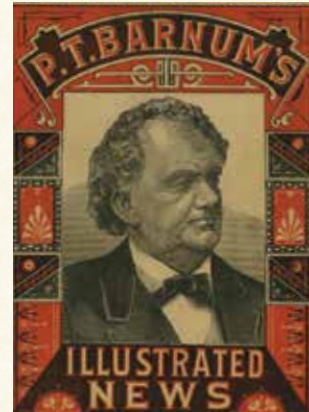


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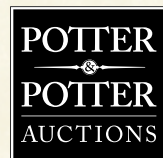
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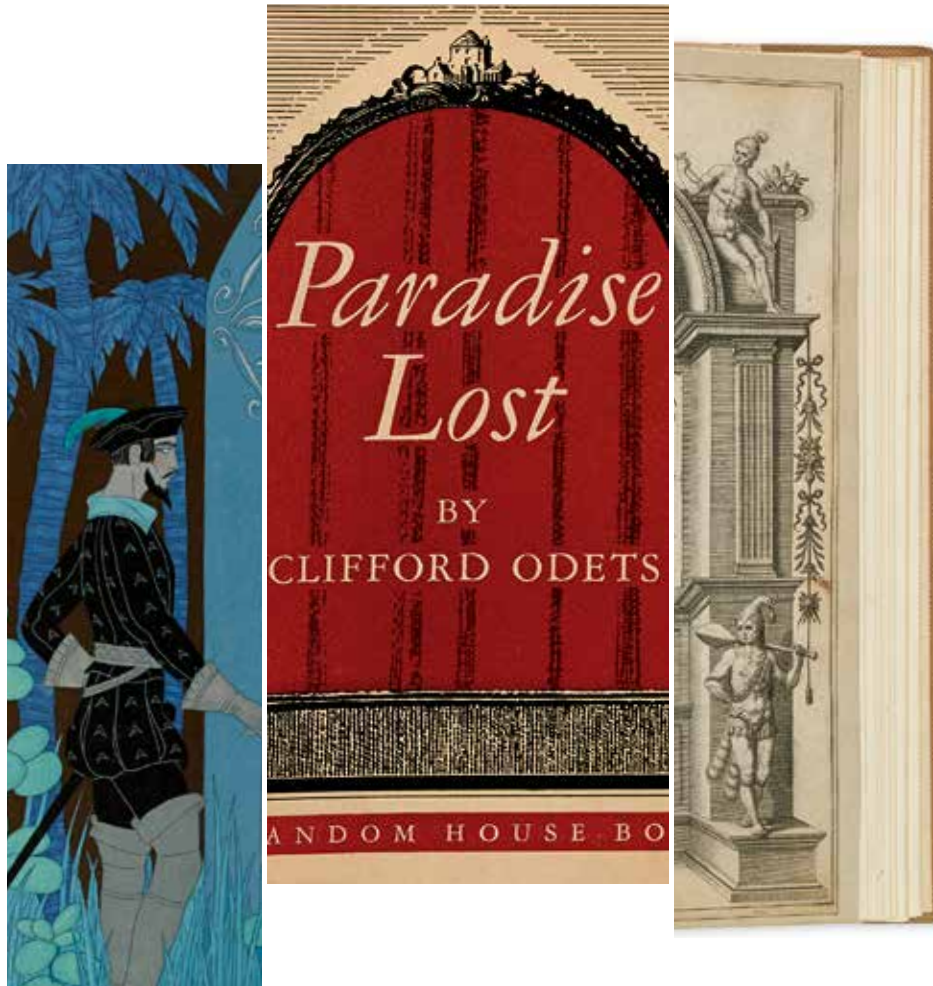
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