

THE EPHEMERA JOURNAL

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A Search for the Last Rock Poster

By MALCOLM WHYTE

My wife Karen and I were winding up our frequent weekend stroll through Marin City Flea Market when we came across a young man in rumpled jeans, a ragged blue denim shirt, and scuffed black boots, sitting on the ground behind a large black portfolio spread open to two loose piles of rock posters from the 1960-1970s.

"Hi," I said, "nice, big collection of posters there! May I take a look?"

"Sure, help yourself."

Right on top of one stack was an intensely colored, sinuously lettered announcement by renowned rock poster artist, Wes Wilson (Figure 1). A large David Singer photo-collage peeked out from the other pile. Quickly leafing through it all I spied Rick Griffin's powerful "heart and torch" design (Figure 2). "This could be a real find!" I thought.

"Are you selling them *all*?" I asked, suppressing my excitement.

"Yeah, if I can...I'm moving to Mexico and I need some cash," he said, dusting gravel off his jeans.

"Mexico, great," I ventured, without surprise. Many young people those days seemed to just take off for a new adventure at some exotic locale like Mexico, Katmandu, or Boulder, Colorado. Selling stuff was one way to make it happen.

Flipping through the collection again, I couldn't tell if any were first printings, but they appeared to be in good shape, bright and clean except for a bit of dust on the top few. Some had tack holes in corners, but no big folds or tears.

"How many are there here?"

"A couple hundred, I guess."

This was in 1975 and, as a father with three growing kids, I never attended any of the wild lightshow/rock concerts or got caught up in collecting the posters created for them. They were so striking, though, and so popular that they were pulled right off the telephone poles or fences as soon as they were posted. I always felt sorry that I missed out on getting some myself, because I love the graphics: the unique, borrowed take on Art Nouveau typography, the jangling, Fauve-like colors, and the clever juxtaposition of images. Suddenly, *here* was a chance to catch up and start a collection! At about fifty cents apiece, it was a pretty good gamble. I signaled Karen with a raised eyebrow and she nodded.

"Would you take \$200 for the lot...including the portfolio?"

The young man appraised us silently and answered, "Yeah, O.K."

"Great! Only one thing. We can't take them now, but if you'll

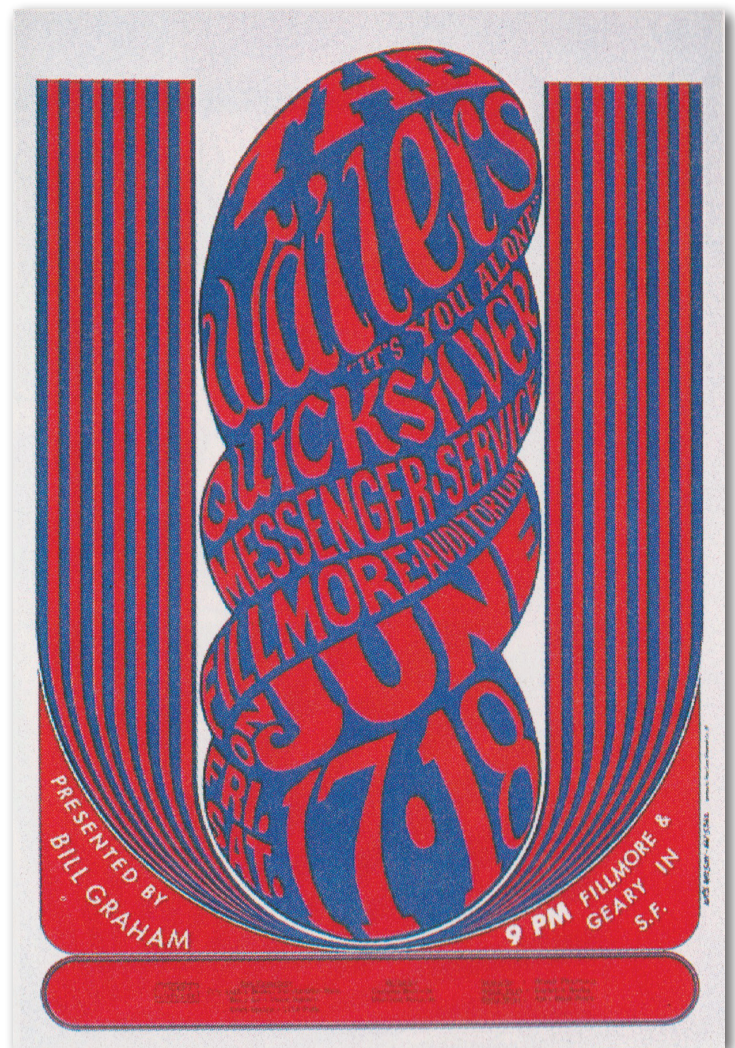


Figure 1. "The Wailers" - Wes Wilson's design for The Wailers with Quicksilver Messenger Service at the Fillmore Auditorium in San Francisco, June 17 & 18, 1966. A classic example of juxtaposition of opposing colors and Wilson's early, limber, hand lettering. Published by Bill Graham, printed by West Coast Lithograph Company. 20.25 x 13.80" (BG-11)

Continued on Page 4

In This Issue: Disney blotters ~ page 10 • James Fenimore Cooper in the hinterlands ~ page 16

Victorian underwear ~ page 21

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It is now the year 2021. Let us today not reference the pandemic, nor the economy, nor politics. What so many of us now crave is relief from all that, and we collectors, archivists and researchers are luckier than many others, because we have our escapes.

For whatever the reason, one personal quirk of mine is that I have always valued pursuit of the obscure. Right or wrong (and who cares?), I've always thought that the more out-in-left-field an object or subject might be, the more intriguing it becomes. "After all, an educated man should admire any course of study no matter how arcane, if it be pursued with curiosity and devotion" (from "A Gentleman in Moscow," by Amor Towles). I recently came across a word new to me: *Adoxography*. It means good writing on a trivial subject, something I have always admired. Not that all writing about obscure subjects is trivial, not by a long shot. We all value good writing that breaks fresh ground on a substantial subject. (As an off-subject aside, one online definition says that adoxography "is particularly useful to lawyers.")

I recently read an unexpectedly interesting 2010 book, "The Phone Book" by Ammon Shea. One section of it seems worth quoting at length:

There is no object so quotidian or insignificant that it has never been grist for the mill of some collecting aficionado. For every J.P. Morgan (who managed to accrue three of the forty-eight extant copies of the Gutenberg Bible to round out his enormous collection of fine art and antiquities) there are likely dozens or even hundreds of people who collect used pencil erasers. It is easy to look down on such people or to erroneously equate them with hoarders, such as the famed Collier brothers, who filled an entire Harlem mansion with stacks of newspapers and unplayable pianos. But the avid collector of the odd ilk bears no more resemblance to your hoarding uncle (the one who keeps thousands of plastic cups in his attic) than a connoisseur of some simple fine food bears to an outright glutton. The things they collect may well be inexplicable to most, but that does not mean they are without some value.

In her book In Flagrate Collecto, Marilynn Gelfman Karp describes collections far more obscure than the tea cozies and bits of colored glass that we have largely come to view as the pursuits of harmless eccentrics. She writes of, and documents with photographs, collections of can openers in the shape of animals, butcher's display tags for cuts of meat, bride and groom cake toppers, an enormous category of the most unimportant possible bits of text ("shopping lists, Instant winner or not, do not disturb signs, keep this coupon, under penalty of law do not remove' tags, sanitized for your protection bands, air sickness bags"), civil war propaganda envelopes, and many other things.

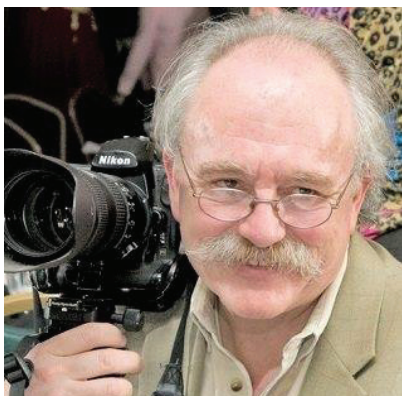
When it is tickling you as you try to fall asleep, a "do not remove under penalty of law" tag on a pillow or mattress is little more than a nuisance, and an unreasonable one at that. But when you view an assemblage of these tags, all neatly organized, culled from decades of minor law-breaking, and spanning numerous typefaces and styles, they assume a different character. A collection of mattress tags may be many things—it may be the thing that sparks memories in the mind of the person who collected them, anger in the person who did not collect them (but has to live with them), sadness in the person who simply does not understand why anyone would want these things—but each one is no longer a simple mattress tag. It is now part of a collection.

Our Past President Bruce Shyer often emphasized that there is great value in bringing together related items, the idea that a collection is more than the sum of its parts, that in gathering together like objects and examining them closely, new meanings and insights arise. In these troubling times, we ephemerists have our loves to keep us warm.

Dick

Richard Sheaff, President

Alfred P. Malpa honored with the Maurice Rickards Award



Our Society owes much of its early vigor to Al Malpa. He not only served in several capacities on the Board of Directors from our beginnings in 1980, but also gently persuaded others to become more than just members. His legacy includes collections now at the Jay T. Last Collection of Graphic Arts and Social History, the Huntington Library; and a reference work on printers and other tradesmen involved with rewards of merit.

Al became interested in ephemera in his teens. In the 1960s, his mother would regularly drive him to an antique shop in North Scituate, RI, where he would search through drawers full of Civil War letters, documents and other “paper Americana”. Enrolled in the Hartt College of Music as a trombonist, he also took a class at the University of Hartford, where the professor introduced him to rewards of merit from his own collection. To Al, this tied directly into another psychology class discussion about theories of positive reinforcement.

In 1981, serving as Vice President of the Society, Al organized a prototype one-day Regional Bazaar in Farmington CT to bring enthusiasts (17 dealers, 131 customers) together in an informal setting (he served his signature lentil soup). This was followed by a succession of other shows and other regional events in the Northeast that Al often organized and always attended.

At the 1982 Ephemera USA 3 event, Al and Bill Mobley mounted an exhibit “Eat, Drink and Be Merry” displaying some 240 pieces of ephemera. Al succeeded Jack Golden as President, and listed his personal home phone number as the Society’s official help line! In his first published presidential letter, Al said: “The greatest Reward I’ve found in being a member of the Ephemera Soci-

ety has been the ability for new relationships with people who share the same excitement about ephemera. Ephemera, being an important social medium itself, is a most suitable means for helping us learn more not only about those who came before us, but also assisting us in better understanding our contemporaries.” In the same issue of *Ephemera News* appeared Al’s whimsical piece about Edward Weston’s “Pepper, No. 30.” Excitement and whimsy continued as an aspect of Al’s involvement with ephemera.

Under Al’s presidency, the hours of our annual event were extended, the Board of Directors was organized into committees, and an Ephemera Journal was planned. When Calvin P. Otto assumed the presidency in 1983, Al took on the role of Secretary, responsible in particular for advertising revenue. In 1987 Al became Chairman of the Board of Directors, a role originally planned to last a single year, but Al agreed to continue serving until 1990. He then chaired the Publications Committee while continuing to serve on the board until 1996. As a member of the Professional Show Managers Association, Al became floor manager for Ephemera 15 in 1995.

Al’s article “For the Faithful Scholar... An introduction to collecting Rewards of Merit” appeared in the Fall 1984 *Ephemera News*, and prompted Al and mentor Rockwell Gardiner to plan a book based on their combined collections. When Rocky died in 1986, the Society established a publication fund as a tribute. Al spent untold hours with a co-author Patricia Fenn to provide a scholarly text, Jack Golden provided the book design, while supportive financial lenders made possible this labor of love. A mock-up of the book was presented in 1992, a proof copy arrived in 1994, and the book went on sale in 1995. (It is still available through Oak Knoll Books). The result of these years of effort—*Rewards of Merit, Tokens of a Child’s Progress and a Teacher’s Esteem as an Enduring Aspect of American Religious and Secular Education*—was a beautiful production, and is to this day the only scholarly work on the subject. Key to its usefulness as a reference book is a “Directory of Booksellers, Engravers, Printers, Publishers, Stationers and

related tradesmen who were involved in the design, production, and distribution of *Rewards of Merit* in the United States” that Al produced.

In September 1994 Al organized a reception in Manhattan to honor Jack Golden as the first recipient of an award in his name “For excellence in graphic design relating to ephemera.” The Jack Golden Award has since been occasionally granted to others.

Al’s career has been in real estate; his avocation in ephemera and friendships. He worked as a newspaper photojournalist, winning a Society of Professional Journalists National Award; and also as an independent professional photographer. During recent years beset with health problems, Al re-ignited his interest in collecting and dealing in ephemera—a truly dedicated collector gaining strength from, and sharing, his passions.

In this Issue...

We are starting a new year with articles that reflect collecting in the time of Covid 19 — **Malcolm Whyte** remembered a great find of rock posters when he was new to collecting modern works. **David Bossert**, a Disney specialist, found time to take a different slant on his collection of blotters. **Michael Dorn**, with an academic background in historical geography, wanted to write about James Fenimore Cooper’s influence in westward expansion, but had to change direction several times when material could not be accessed in institutional collections. And we watched **Barbara Rusch’s** presentation on the interface of modesty and prurience in Victorian (even Queen Victoria’s) underwear on line rather than at our annual conference and fair. We look forward to being able to gather again, but are grateful to have a collecting passion that can survive social distancing.

—Diane DeBlois, editor



Figure 2. "Heart and Torch" Rick Griffin's design for Big Brother and the Holding Company, with Santana, September 12, 13, 14 1968 at Fillmore West, San Francisco. The powerful effect of a burning torch thrusting from a bright red heart and Griffin's unique 3-D calligraphy makes the viewer stop and look, while trying to grasp its symbolic meaning. 22 x 14" (BG-136)

bring them to my shop in the City, I'll give you the \$200 — in cash."

I gave him my Troubador Press business card with its address on Folsom Street in San Francisco, where I published children's activity books, cookbooks and an occasional art book. We shook hands and left the market.

Monday morning Tom showed up at the office. We hefted the portfolio on to my desk and unzipped it. The pile of posters seemed alarmingly larger than I remembered. We chatted for a moment about how he collected them, attending the concerts where they were given out, sometimes removing them from wherever they were tacked up, or trading with friends. I gave him the money and wished him good luck in Mexico as he left with a satisfied smile.

Left alone with this prodigious cache, I felt overwhelmed. What was I going to do with them all? I'd learned that some were already quite valuable. The portfolio was a mix of "Fillmore" posters, published by Bill Graham for his programs at San Francisco's Fillmore Auditorium, "Family Dog" posters produced by Chet Helms for dances

at the Avalon Ballroom, and a few miscellaneous others. If I was going to make some order out of this jumbled acquisition, I needed to learn what, beside my personal admiration for the art, made this printed ephemera so highly prized.

An Abridged History of Poster Art

Posted public announcements predate ancient Rome, but it was French artist Jules Chéret (1836-1932) who turned the humble poster into collectible art. Using a sophisticated process of ink-water resist on huge, chemically-treated limestone blocks, he produced stunning, full-color lithographic prints to publicize products, events and performances. His work inspired other iconic 19th century poster artists like Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec (1864-1901), Alphonse Mucha (1860-1939) and Ludwig Hohlwein (1874-1949). Posters from this process were noted for their nuances of color. Subtle smoky clouds and bold rich reds and purples could be achieved by manually printing each color — often overlapping— one at a time.

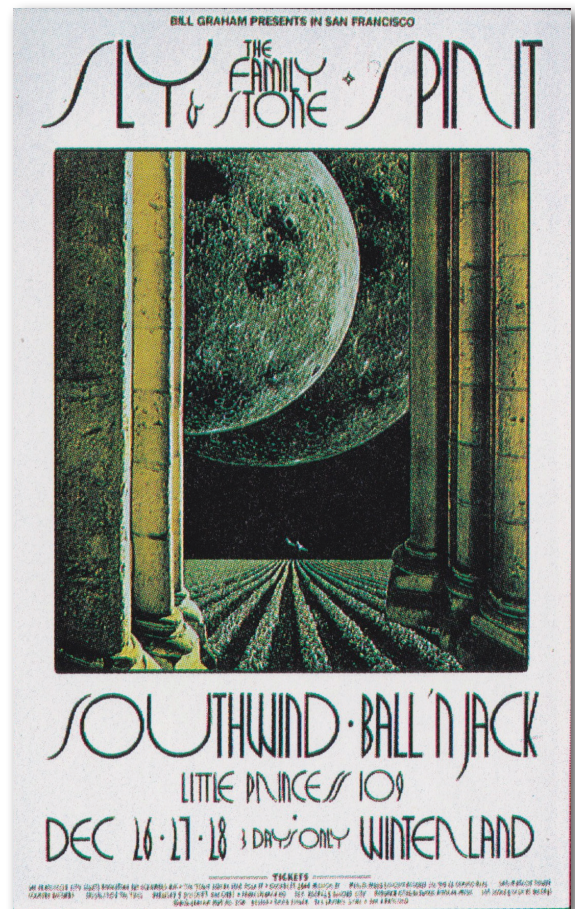


Figure 3. David Singer design for Sly & the Family Stone, December 26, 27, 28, 1969 at Winterland, San Francisco. One of many photo-collaged posters Singer did for Bill Graham. Here he creates an awesome sense of the vastness of outer space, echoing a vision sometimes induced by hal-lucinogenic drugs. 13.75 x 21.80" (BG-208)



Figure 4. "The Sound" - Wes Wilson's design for Jefferson Airplane and Muddy Waters at Winterland September 23 to October 1, 1966; and Butterfield Blues Band September 25 to October 2 at the Fillmore Auditorium, San Francisco. Wes Wilson designs what I consider to be the definitive rock poster: a triplex of jarring hues (acid green vs. red-orange); his hallmark hand lettering; and a sinuous, art nouveau-inspired nude. 24.5 x 13.5" (BG-29)

The invention of rotary photo-offset lithographic printing, patented in England by Robert Barclay in 1875,¹ and improved upon by Ira Washington Rubel in 1905, did away with the hefty and expensive limestones. Printing mechanically from a photo-sensitized cardboard plate, "offsetting" the image onto a revolving rubber blanket, then back to a sheet of paper produced sharp reproductions in perfect registration every time.

In 1951 the first modern photo-offset lithographic printing was made possible by the invention of photo-sensitive metal plates from the 3M Corporation. Using only three colored inks—

yellow, cyan and magenta—plus black, the most radiant of images could be printed quickly and inexpensively. This new process was ideal for creating all kinds of posters, for sporting events (boxing and wrestling especially), church meetings, political messaging, business recognition, patriotic propaganda, pin-up calendars, theatrical announcements, etc.

It was San Francisco rock poster artists, however, who pushed the offset press to the limit. The world had never seen such shocking, bold printing. Violently clashing colors, eye-straining lettering, and a surreal blend of sacred and provocative imagery made these posters a hit from the start. According to celebrated graphic designer Milton Glaser (1929-2020):

Rock posters of the 1960s-70s synthesized many elements in the air at the time—surrealism, dada, op art, art nouveau, decadence, and finally, a kind of innocence.²

Family Dog impresario Chet Helms offers an insider's view:

The parallels between the belle époque poster and the psychedelic poster are obvious, but the 1960s posters also were rooted in the American free speech tradition of political and

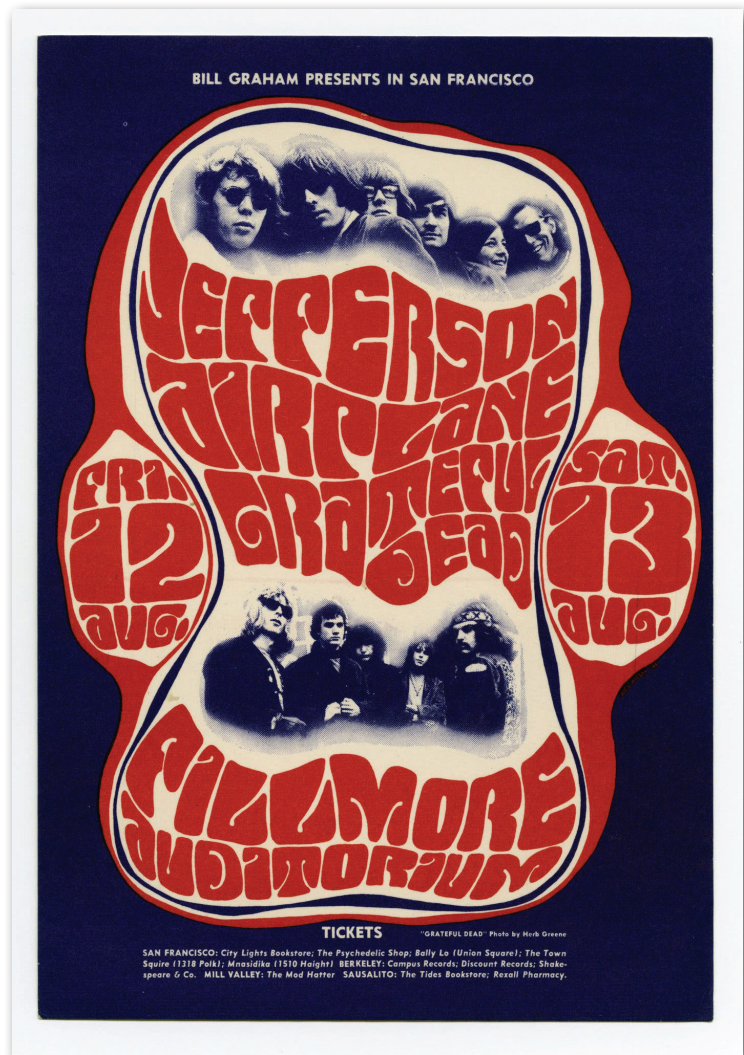


Figure 5. Wes Wilson's design for Jefferson Airplane and Grateful Dead, August 12 & 13, 1966 at Fillmore Auditorium, San Francisco. Photographer Herb Greene. 14.25 x 20" (BG-23)



Figure 6. James H. Gardner's design for the same concert line-up as Figure 5, but at the O'Keefe Centre in Toronto, Canada, July 31 to August 5, 1967. 14.25 x 20" (BG-74)



Figure 7. "Iron Butterfly" by Rick Griffin and Victor Moscoso, October 1968. With styles both unique and complementary to each other, they blend seamlessly in an arresting composition. The severity of Griffin's iron God-monster and blazing beams is offset by Moscoso's animated yin-yang globules. The poster demands that the viewer make some effort to get the message. Besides their rock poster work, both artists also contributed to underground comix. 14 x 21" (BG-141)

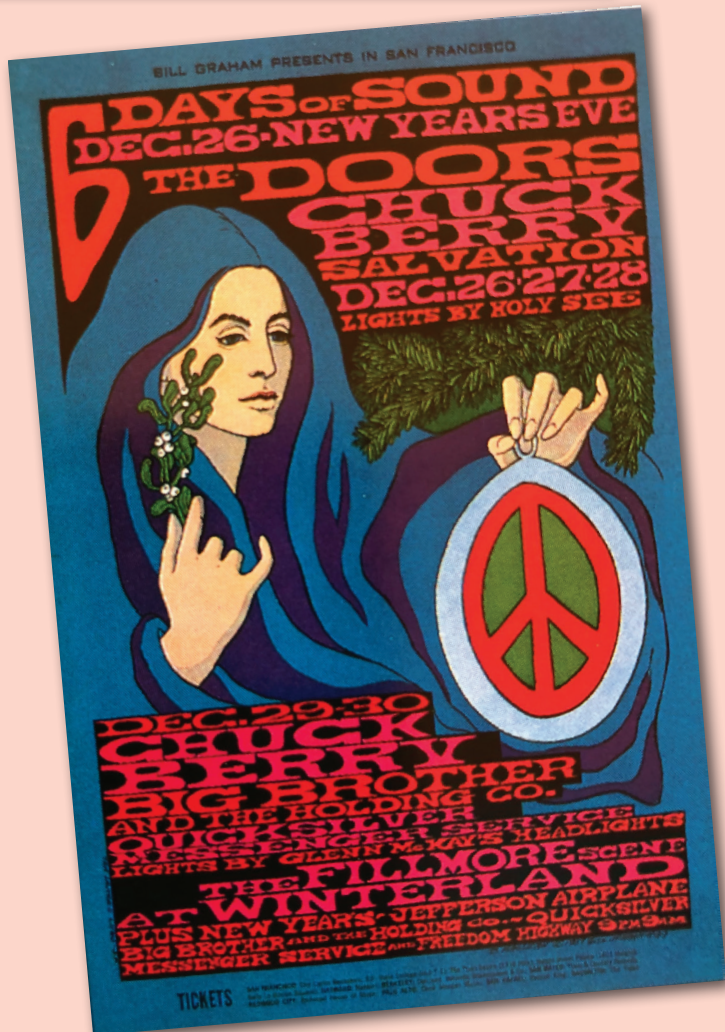


Figure 8. "Six Days of Sound" Bonnie McLean's design for The Doors and Chuck Berry, December 26 to 28, 1967 at Winterland (with several other artists). MacLean stepped in handily from her administrative job for Bill Graham after Wes Wilson quit designing for Graham. She designed scores of posters in her own style, and stood out as one of the only women in the business. 24.5 x 37" (BG-99)

social pamphleteering. The central issue of the 1960s was civil liberty and personal freedom. The posters were vehicles for both, incorporating new graphic techniques and juxtaposing colors that traditionally were never printed side by side, [a technique] borrowed from the Impressionists and the more methodical studies of Josef Albers.

The values of this emerging culture were conveyed through verbal and visual double entendre, sexual innuendo, drug innuendo, and sometimes by merely placing two images near each other on a page and allowing the viewer to draw his own conclusions. In this way the unspoken was spoken, forbidden subjects were discussed, suppressed feelings held in common were acknowledged.³

Rick Griffin, Alton Kelly, Stanley Mouse, Victor Moscoso and Wes Wilson are considered the “Big Five” of rock poster artists. Here, Wes Wilson recounts what went into his poster making:

*I think I selected my colors from my visual experiences with LSD. I was already headed in a certain direction ... and when I found this catalog for the November 1965 Jugendstil and Expressionism exhibit at the University of California, which included Viennese Secessionism lettering I was able to adapt it and use it on almost all my posters from that point on.*⁴

“Filling”

There were 224 Fillmore posters in the flea market portfolio; a full Fillmore run is 289. Each was identified by a number (BG-1, BG-2, etc.), so I knew which ones were needed to complete the collection. I decided to concentrate on completing the Fillmore collection and sell all the other posters along with a group of Fillmore postcards, whose design matched the poster of the same date.

Four years after the 1975 purchase, I began the hunt for the missing numbers with a call at Bill Graham’s office/warehouse at the foot of Howard Street in San Francisco. I handed my want list to the man in the paisley shirt at the counter. He pulled about thirty posters from the back—mostly first run, and all in mint condition—which I took home for about \$5 apiece. It was good that I went when I did, because on May 7, 1985 an arsonist set fire to the place destroying over a million dollars’ worth of irreplaceable music archives, some of Grahams trophies, and an incalculable number of vintage posters.

The next year I stopped at Postermat, Ben Friedman’s store on Columbus Avenue in the City’s North Beach area. Ben was a jovial, canny septuagenarian. His crinkly smile was framed by a wiry beard and mustache, and he wore a weathered old Greek fisherman’s cap. After two hours of his anecdotes and casual rummaging through old wooden drawers, he produced a baker’s dozen posters to help fill in my gaps. Like those from Bill Graham’s warehouse, most were first printings in very fine condition—at \$10-\$25 each.

A tip from another collector led me, in 1981, to Dennis Mosgofian. Dennis worked periodically with his father,

Lavon, at his T. Lautrec Litho print shop. Lavon was a venerated journeyman printer who had been in his seventies during the rock poster heyday. He printed most of the posters published by Bill Graham. Working at T. Lautrec gave Dennis access to unblemished, first run posters. That was important because, although *condition* is a prime consideration when collecting “multiples” (art prints, posters, rare books), having a “first issue” is right up there with it.

Dennis and I had a good time talking posters, the artists, and working with his dad. From Dennis I scratched BG-95, 192, 202, and 219, from my want list — paying \$30-\$60 apiece. Before leaving, I asked if he had a BG-74. “No,” he said “but if I did it would cost around \$1,000!”

BG-74, a Wes Wilson poster for a 1967 Jefferson Airplane/Grateful Dead concert in Toronto (Figure 6), had the same line-up of bands as BG-23 (Figure 5), which was printed for a 1966 concert in San Francisco. Both posters feature the same deep-blue and red colors and are very similar in design. But there are significant differences. The two posters use different Herb Greene photographs of the Jefferson Airplane bandmates. The two concert sites are

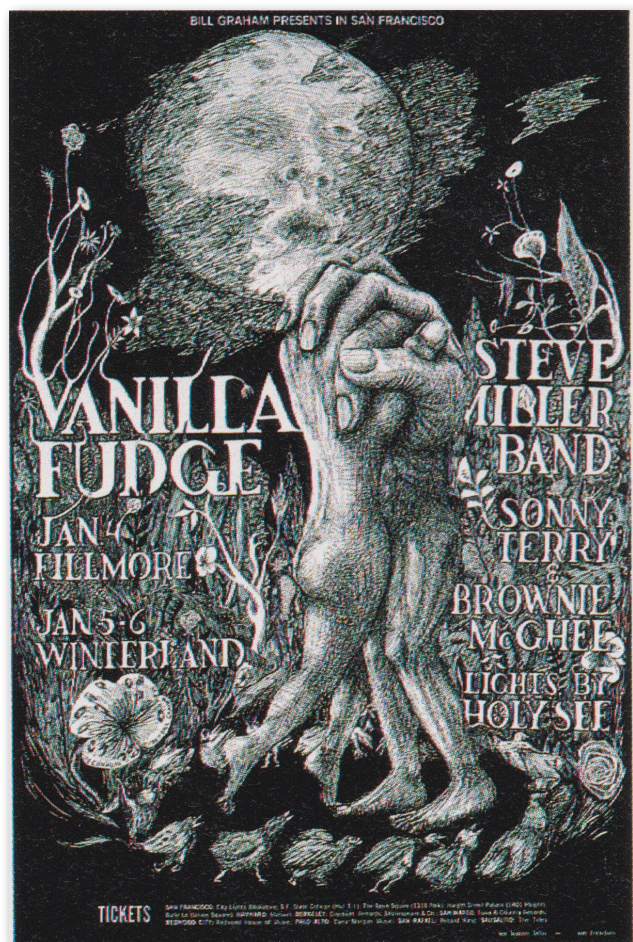


Figure 9. “Vanilla Fudge” by Lee Conklin, January 1968. Conklin’s posters are particularly striking for his fantastic creations, mostly of the human form. Here a naked couple embrace as their head and shoulders meld into an apparent homage to weird drawings by Heinrich Kley (1843-1945) and Roland Topor (1938-1997). 14 x 21” (BG-101)

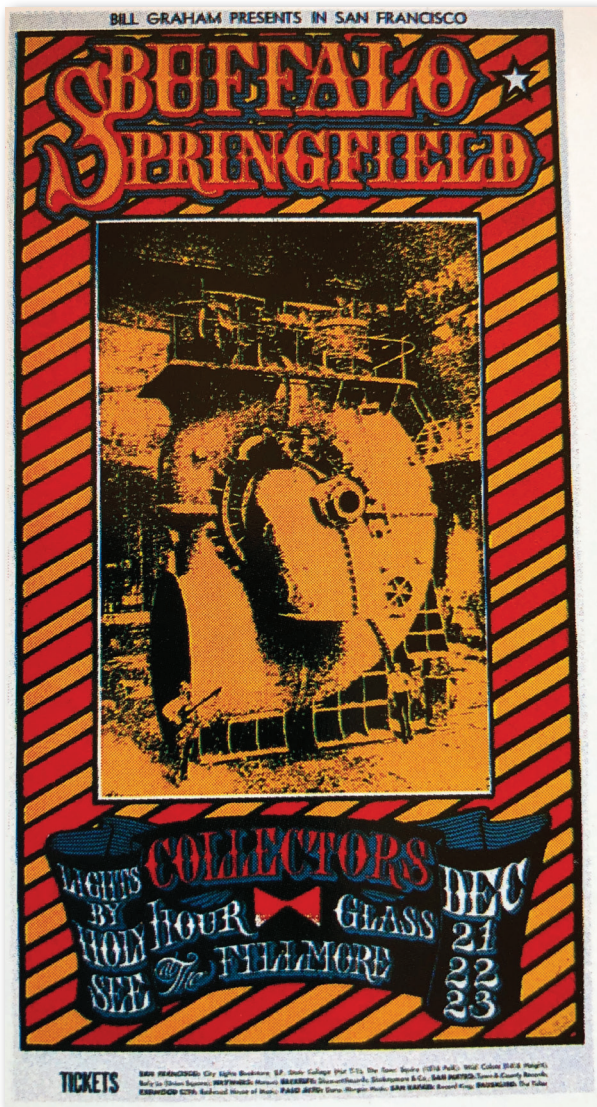


Figure 10. “Buffalo Springfield” by Stanley Mouse and Alton Kelly, December 1967. Using early 20th century letter forms and period imagery, Mouse and Kelly designs are often more formal than psychedelic. Their brilliant eye-catching, orange-and-red color scheme here fits perfectly into the rock poster genre. 11 x 21” (BG-98)

different. And BG-23 had a second printing, while BG-74 was printed only once. Finally, very few U.S. collectors attended the Canadian concert or ever saw the poster.

This price spread (between \$30 and \$1,000 for a BG poster in 1981) is based on quantity and holds throughout any poster collection. Dockets from T. Lautrec Litho showed print runs numbered between 500 and 5000, depending on the design and the bands.³ Compounding the individual print run variable is the number of successive printings. Early Quicksilver Messenger Service concerts, for example, had as many as three printings, and the June 24-25, 1966 (BG-13) concert starring Lenny Bruce went into a fourth printing. A 2000 price guide shows the declining average value of printings with this poster: near mint condition, 1st printing - \$1,500; 4th printing - \$100.⁶

In addition to single posters that were tacked up, fistfuls from the printer were given to local head, record, and book

shops. As the rage for collecting posters grew, they were sold in bulk to dealers for distribution worldwide, further diluting the poster’s scarcity.

Continuing my hunt in 1981, I met with collector/dealer John Berns in his San Francisco apartment to acquire BG-192, 199 and 220. The Led Zeppelin poster (BG-199), designed by Randy Tuten, has a photo image of the nose of the giant airship emerging dramatically from the background with a startling 3-D effect. This mint condition, first printing alone, set me back \$900! I asked John if he had a BG-74.

“Not right now, but I can get you one for about \$1,500.”

“Oh, thanks anyway,” I murmured on departure, having already spent much more than I intended. After that, collecting went on hiatus while I negotiated the sale of Troubador Press and opened a new office in San Francisco. By 1985 things had settled down and it was time to revisit John Berns who always seemed to have the missing posters that I needed. Indeed, he had BG-6, 7, and 35. That completed my collection of Fillmore posters—except, of course, for BG-74 which by then would cost \$2,000 for a good copy.

Rationalizing

I now had 288 of the 289 Fillmore posters and that was good enough for me. I told myself I didn’t need #74 because it was for a *Canadian* concert and all the other posters were for California events. I *certainly* didn’t need to spend *two thousand dollars* for just another piece of paper.

My good pal, George Fox, insisted that I *did* need to. George was a savvy fellow collector (we both subscribed to each new poster designed and printed by David Lance Goines) and longstanding member of the Ephemera Society of America. Over and over he would urge me:

“You must get #74 to *really* complete your collection.”

“Why?” I grumbled, “#74 and #23 were almost the same design.”

“Doesn’t matter,” he countered “they’re *not* the same.

You’ve got to have them *both*.”

“Yes, but... \$2,000!”

“Believe me,” George insisted, “it’ll be worth it! The completed collection will be worth more than the sum of its parts...and it’s a major document of popular culture. You’ll be so glad that you made the effort”

“Well, I don’t know, George. I’ll think about it.”

Deciding

And think about it I did...for seven years.

It seemed that few collectors were aiming to get *all* of the Fillmore posters. Some concentrated on specific bands or personalities featured at the events. Others collected designs by their favorite artist. It would help if I knew what my collection was already worth. So, in 1992, I contacted Eric King, author of *Eric King’s Collector’s Guide to Psychedelic Rock Concert Posters, Postcards and Handbills 1965 to 1973 Fillmore Ballroom - Bill Graham - Avalon Ballroom - Chet Helms - Family Dog - Grande Ballroom - Russ Gibb - Neon Rose - Victor Moscoso - Vulcan Gas Co.* I asked if he would appraise my rock poster collection - and if he had a

BG-74. He said he would— and he *did*. He would bring it along.

King came to our Mill Valley home, carefully inspected each poster, and recorded its points by hand: BG number, printing, condition, flaws and value. For example, he'd record "BG-8, 1st staple tear ur/crn, 4 ½" tear at top. mild fade, light soil, \$200 .00" or "BG-24, 3rd, Mint, \$60.00." The list had some pleasant surprises. For instance, out of 288 posters, 121 of them were first printing *and* mint! Also, 56 of the first 62 were designed by Wes Wilson, who from my point of view, was the definitive artist of the Psychedelic Rock Poster era.

"This is a very nice collection, Malcolm." King observed brightly.

"Well, thanks, Eric. Of course, it doesn't have BG-74. Uh, how much is the one you brought?"

King pondered. "Tell you what. It's yours for \$2,900, and no charge for the appraisal. That's a fair price because, although the poster is a first printing—actually, there was *only one* printing—it has a small stain in the lower right corner. I can't tell you how hard it is to come by a copy in *any* condition!"

With some hesitation, I bought BG-74, as is—the rock poster that completed my collection!

George Fox gave me excellent counsel: don't worry about spending more than you planned to improve or complete a collection; the delay will probably cost you more later. King's 1992 appraisal, including #74, totaled \$32,060. In April, 2000, King reappraised the lot. It had doubled to \$65,640. If memory serves me right, I spent about \$7,500 on *all* the posters, including that initial \$200 purchase at the Marin City flea market.

Updating

Last year two poignant reminders of the rock posters' golden era came a week apart in the *San Francisco Chronicle's* obituary section. Pop music critic, Aidin Vaziri wrote: "Bonnie Maclean, one of the primary poster artists of the late 1960s psychedelic rock era, and onetime wife of concert promoter, Bill Graham, died February 4 at a hospice care facility in Newton, PA. She was 80." (See Figure 8)

A week earlier, Vaziri reported: "Wes Wilson, the artist who helped define the radical visual style of the psychedelic rock era in the late 1960s with his retina-searing posters for band such as the Grateful Dead, Jefferson Airplane and Quicksilver Messenger Service, died Friday, January 24, at his home in Aurora, Mo. He was 82. Wilson's work was featured in *Time* (which described his style as 'Nouveau Frisco'), *Life* and *Variety* magazines, and in years since has been featured in retrospective shows at several fine arts museums, including the De Young Museum and SFO Museum in San Francisco, the Smithsonian and Museum of Modern Art in New York. The classic Fillmore posters are still traded by collectors all over the world. A complete set could fetch as much as \$250,000. Grant McKinnon of S. F. Rock Posters and Collectibles told the *Chronicle*. 'There's a small handful that are just brutal to find,' McKinnon says."

I'm pleased to have saved one of the "brutal handful" of Fillmore posters. Looking through the collection over time has refreshed my high regard for the inventiveness of these artists. Surprises have popped up, too. For example, I found that a good number of the posters were designed by Greg Irons who, along with Victor Moscoso and Rick Griffin, was one of the top cartoonists of Underground Comix, which I *did* collect from their beginning. Each book and exhibition catalog about the posters or their artists has further enhanced my admiration for the art.

Several years ago, I passed the collection on to my oldest son. He framed and displayed a few of them in his living room at the request of *his* son who was transfixed by their color and design. What will become of the collection is now up to him. That this fascinating art is still prized by three successive generations is testimony to the rich intrinsic and aesthetic value of these breathtaking, paper promotions for one-night-only rock concerts of a bygone era.

Endnotes

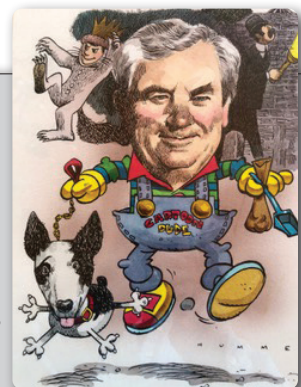
- 1 Wikipedia, accessed June 2020.
- 2 "Design and Belief," *Images of an era: the American Poster 1945-1975*, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. , p. 175.
- 3 Paul Grushkin, *The Art of Rock*, Abbeville Press Inc., 1987, New York, NY, p. 71.
- 4 Paul Grushkin, *The Art of Rock*, Abbeville Press Inc., 1987, New York, NY, p. 74.
- 5 www.famsf.org/files/Binder_BPGA_Vol.29.pdf. *The Book and Paper Group Annual 29*, 2010
- 6 Fred Williams, *The Fifth Edition Rock Poster Price Guide*, Dallas Design Group, 2000, p. 37.

Selected Reading

- The Great Poster Trip: Art Eureka*, Cummings G. Walker, Coyne & Blanchard, 1968.
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Malcolm Whyte

founder of the Cartoon art Museum, San Francisco; member, The Book Club of California; author of *Gorey Secrets* (Fall, 2021) is pictured with a few of his favorite preoccupations in a caricature by Jim Hummel.



© 2020 Jim Hummel

Walt Disney Classified: *The Advertising Ink Blotters*

BY DAVID A. BOSSERT

The *Declaration of Independence*, the *Constitution of the United States of America*, the *Magna Carta*, and other historical documents throughout the world were written using modest dip pens. A dip pen uses a split nib, usually metal, which is then dipped into ink and used to write on paper or parchment. Documents, letters, and other forms of writing have been written with dip pens for centuries. The earliest known split-nib metal dip pen dates back to the 4th century A.D. in Roman Britain.¹ Fountain pens began to appear in Europe by the 17th century, but they were still known to be unreliable as they stained hands and clothing with ink.² In May 1809 Frederick Fölsch received the first patent for a fountain pen while John Scheffer's patent of 1819 was the first design to enjoy commercial success.³ By the mid-1800s, the fountain pen became a conventional writing implement. Yet, throughout the centuries, there was a persistent problem of smearing words or signatures before the ink dried. Hence the invention of an ink blotting powder and eventually blotter paper as a way to hasten ink drying to prevent mishaps.

Ink blotting was initially done by using a delicate, sand-like powder known as 'pounce' made from cuttlefish bone, which was sprinkled onto the wet ink to facilitate quicker drying.⁴ But the most common form was the use of blotting paper, which is a highly absorbent paper that

was first made, by accident, in the 15th century. A worker at a paper mill in England had forgotten to add sizing to a batch of paper during the papermaking process. Sizing is a substance introduced to the paper pulp that adds a filler and glaze "to change the absorption and wear characteristics" of the paper making it less absorbent and a smoother surface for writing.⁵ That lousy batch of paper was discarded as scrap. When someone at the mill attempted to write on that paper, the ink absorbed and spread wildly into the paper, making it useless for writing but perfect for blotting ink. The blotter paper was invented, which quickly replaced the pounce as a better and less messy tool of choice for drying fresh scribed ink.

By 1885, Charles Murch patented a way to adhere printable paper to the blotting paper paving the way for publishers and companies to create desktop advertisements. These advertising ink blotters became universally familiar in the office and at home throughout America as well as other parts of the world by the early 1900s. They were used to promote anything from butter to salt to gasoline, auto repair stations, soda, banks, and every other consumer product and service that the public uses. These ink blotters were also used by politicians to give constituents the "candidate's information on one side, while the absorbent paper on the reverse ensured that the card would linger

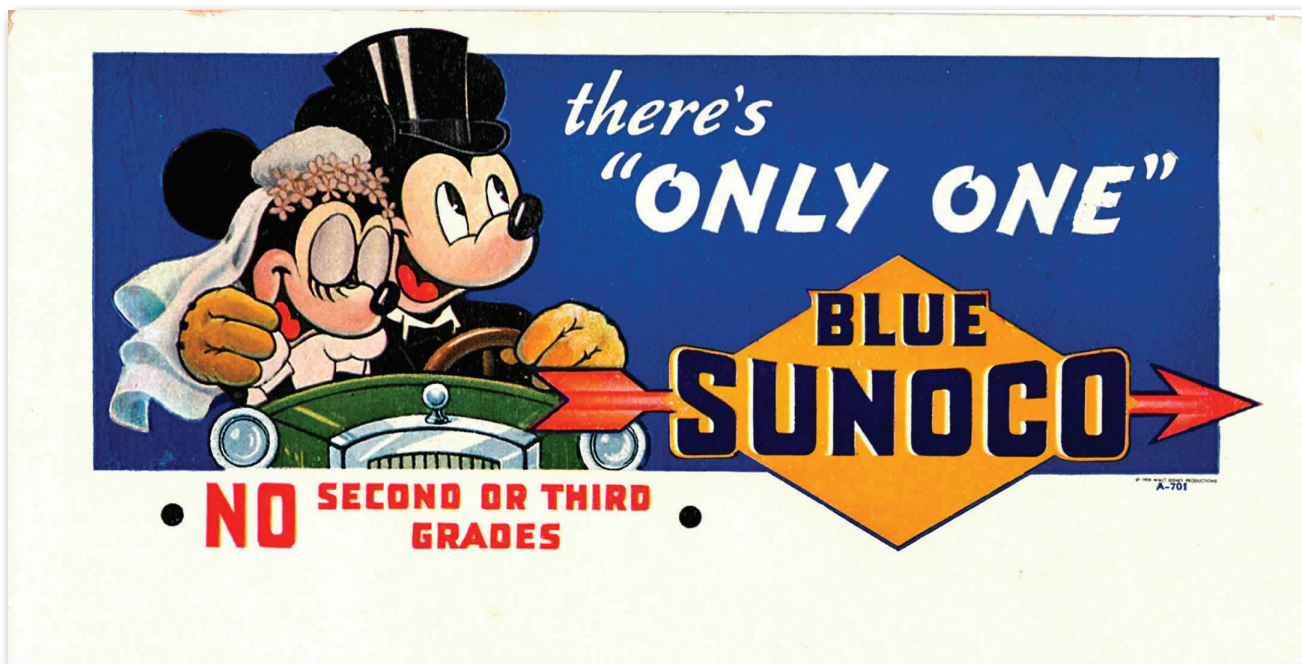


Figure 1. The "There's Only One" Sunoco ink blotter featuring Mickey and Minnie Mouse from 1939. The offset lithographed blotter, 4" x 7 1/2," uses the "pupil-eyed" Mickey Mouse design developed by animator Fred Moore, who did not do this drawing. The visual of the character's romance is playing off the advertising slogan "there's only one," which is referring to the Blue Sunoco fuel brand, the point of the advertisement.



Figure 2. A French ink blotter featuring Donald Duck pitching Grey-Poupon Dijon. Translated into English, Donald is saying, "Require Mustard "Grey-Poupon" Dijon in Walt Disney glasses," with the tagline below, "The "Glory" Mustard is a Grey-Poupon Product."

on a desk for weeks as a reminder of the candidate."⁶

Advertising ink blotters became so ubiquitous that Walt Disney began licensing his animated characters to promote brands from several companies such as Sunoco Oil, Cadum Soap, and B.N. Biscuits on ink blotters among many other things. Donald Duck was even used on ink blotters to pitch Grey Poupon Dijon in France, which in my opinion lacks character integrity oversight.⁷ Disney also licensed still images reminiscent of some of his short cartoons for co-branded ink blotters, for instance Donald Duck and his nephews skating - no doubt inspired by *The Hockey Champ* (1939) - used to promote the Arlington Trust Company of Massachusetts in January 1948. Other themes were presented as part of a monthly series of ink blotters for the Arlington Trust Company depicting the Fab Five— Mickey Mouse, Minnie Mouse, Donald Duck, Goofy, and Pluto in various seasonal themes.⁸

The artwork for these ink blotters was done through the Disney Publicity Production Department by artist Hank Porter, who also created many of the WWII insignia.⁹ Porter's drawings have a pleasing, distinctive appeal to them, and he signed Walt Disney's name in a very particular way that denotes the work by this artist. According to historian and Hank Porter biographer David Lesjak, he also was one of the few artists who could draw all the characters flawlessly on model.¹⁰ Reviewing Porter's immense body of work at Disney shows his consistent level of quality and visual acuity in drawing the characters. Regardless

of whether the art was used for Military insignia, merchandise, advertisements, or even a simple disposable ink blotter, Porter was a master draftsman. Although Porter was not the only artist working in the Disney Publicity Production Department at that time, he was one of the best. Upon careful examination of the artwork produced from that department, it is not difficult to distinguish Porter's artwork from other artists in the group as each artist has "tells" in their drawing styles that often act as identifiers.

One of the most prominent uses of the Fab Five on ink blotters was with oil company Sunoco, which had a licensing agreement with Disney from 1938-1946.¹¹ Sunoco is an acronym for the Sun Oil Company of Ohio, which was engaged in producing, refining, transporting, and storing oil, as well as marketing petroleum products through a network of service stations. The company revolutionized the oil industry in the 1950s when it introduced the *Custom Blending Pump*,



Figure 3. Two in a series of twelve ink blotters issued by Arlington Trust Company, of Massachusetts, in 1948. These ink blotters are somewhat larger than most measuring 3 3/4" X 9" giving the images prominence.

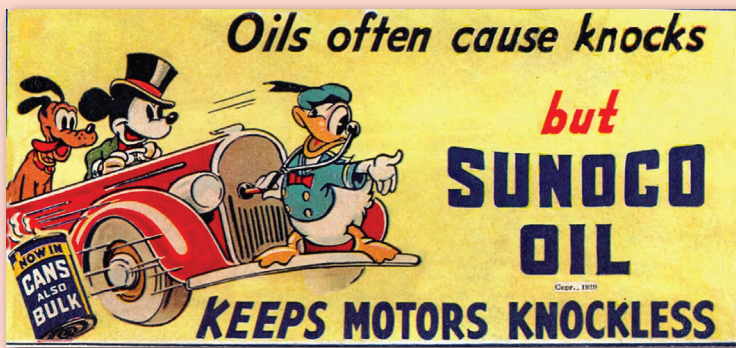


Figure 4. The 1939 “Keeps Motors Knockless” Sunoco ink blotter is using the “coal-eyed” character designs of Mickey Mouse and Pluto more indicative of the early 1930s. By 1939, Mickey Mouse had the “pupil-eyed” design created by animator Fred Moore in 1938. This blotter was clearly in the design transition period and at the beginning of the new license agreement with Disney.



Figure 6. The “Quick Start” ink blotter featuring Donald Duck was issued in 1938. Sunoco advertised its claim of quick starting motors with the new Blue Sunoco gasoline. The drawing was created in the Disney Publicity Production Department. Most of the ink blotter was created using the offset lithography process.



Figure 7 (above). The “Flows—Even Below Zero” ink blotter featuring a late 1930s Pluto design. This ink blotter was issued in 1940 and was not drawn by Hank Porter but by an unknown artist in the Disney Publicity Production Department.

Figure 8 (left). The “Double Protection” ink blotter issued by Sunoco in April 1941. Note the sword and rifle with a bayonet; these are no longer acceptable for cartoon characters to use or even hold according to character guidelines at Disney.



Figure 9. “Instant Response” Sunoco ink blotter featuring Donald Duck getting smacked in the beak. The blank space was left for the individual service stations to stamp their business name and contact information. October 1941.



Figure 5. Sunoco keychain and postcard featuring Mickey Mouse. The keychain shows Mickey holding a banner with “Sunoco Mercury Made Motor Oil” on it. You may be wondering who would send out a postcard from Sunoco? The answer, the independent Sunoco service stations likely used these as a marketing tool to their customers. Mickey firing a musket is no longer permitted under current Disney character guidelines.

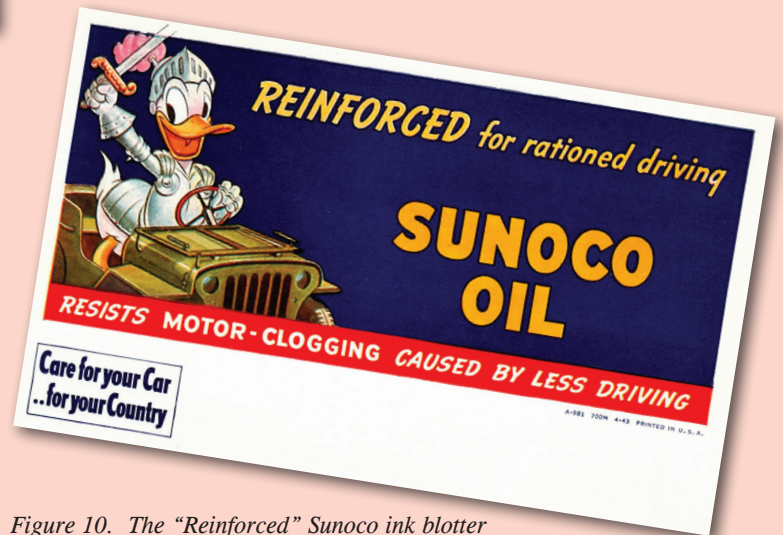


Figure 10. The “Reinforced” Sunoco ink blotter reflects the benefits of Sunoco oil for “Resists Motor-Clogging Caused By Less Driving” due to the fuel rationing that was in effect at that time. April 1943.

an innovative “system for dispensing a choice of five octane grades of gasoline from a single pump.”¹² Sunoco had a previous license agreement with Disney in the earlier 1930s, which used the “pie-eyed” Mickey and Minnie Mouse models on gasoline pump plates and other signage at service stations, which proved very successful. The company was aggressive in its marketing efforts for the Sunoco brand of fuel and services. Sunoco expanded the relationship with Disney through a renewed license agreement in 1938, handled by Kay Kamen, that showcased the broader, updated “pupil-eyed,” Fab Five character designs. These characters were used on everything from in-service station banners, porcelain enamel metal signage, ink blotters, placards on the back of taxi cabs, key chains, postcards, and other forms of printed advertisements.

The licensing agreement is unusual by The Walt Disney Company’s standards today in that the characters are pitching the Sunoco oil, Nu-Blue fuel, and service brands. Typically today, the Disney characters do not hold, endorse, or overtly pitch third party products. Although the characters today may appear on co-branded products like cereal, they never look like they are pitching or endorsing the product. Yet some of the ad images from the 1930s and 1940s show Donald Duck holding a can of Sunoco oil, Pluto interacting with a branded oil jar, and Mickey Mouse wearing a military uniform and flashing a victory sign behind a Sunoco oil jar oriented as a military canon complete with tires. The policy for using the Disney characters in co-branding has evolved more strictly since that time.

One of the first ink blotters produced under the new license agreement in 1938 shows Donald Duck in a red coupe convertible being pushed forcefully by a ram with the slogan, “A Quick Start, Blue Sunoco, Peps Up Cold Motors.” Curiously, this blotter has a Disney copyright, but others that were created in 1940 and beyond did not carry any such mark.¹³ The lack of copyright is not surprising since there is a significant inconsistency in the use of such marks during that period, especially the WWII years.

Another ink blotter advertisement, circa 1940, features Pluto huffing warm breath onto the base of an outdoor thermometer, wearing mittens on all four paws while his wagging tail appears to have knocked over a quart jar and spout of oil, which is flowing over a sign of Sunoco “W” oil. The slogan on the blotter reads, “Flows-- Even Below Zero.” The next blotter from 1940 touts the quick starting Nu-Blue fuel that is “A Hero Below Zero” and shows Donald Duck pinning a medal on a proud gas pump. Below the image, it states to “FILL UP TODAY AT” leaving room for the individual service stations to stamp their business name and address. Yet another from 1940 features Mickey Mouse speeding along in a red convertible with the slogan, “UNSURPASSED in mileage” at the top of the blotter with part of that text breaking across one of Mickey’s ears.¹⁴



Figure 11. The “Car Saver” ink blotter that features the Buy War Bonds logo for the first time, in September 1942.

The next ink blotter referenced, from April 1941, shows Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck in uniforms, somewhat reminiscent of the Civil War outfits, complete with epaulets. Mickey is smiling as he appears to be drawing his sword while Donald is visibly angry, carrying a flint-lock rifle complete with bayonet. The ad slogan, “Double Protection For your Motor,” and then states “1. Fights Friction 2. Prevents Hard Carbon” use the words, “Protection, Fights, and Prevents” are implied subliminal messaging of the impending war. These types of messages reflect the broad stroke societal feelings towards the war raging in Europe at the time.

By October 1941, Sunoco released a new ink blotter that featured Donald Duck, in a tank top with boxing gloves on, being hit in the beak by a leather boxing speed bag with the slogan, “Instant Response.” This imagery is no doubt viewed as a harbinger to the U.S. entering WWII.¹⁵ The character is in a fighting mode as the U.S. would enter the war just two months later on December 7, 1941. The image also evokes a sucker punch to Donald Duck, much like the surprise attack on that occurred on the Pearl Harbor Naval Base. U.S. public opinion was at its highest, with 97% in favor of the war against Japan.¹⁶ America did make an “instant response,” albeit five months later, with the daring Doolittle Raid on Tokyo.¹⁷ As minor as the Sunoco/Disney advertising ink blotters were, they reflected, like so many other things in society at that time, the mood as the U.S. entered the war in both the Pacific and Europe. Note the subtle design change of the Sunoco logo arrow, which previously pointed to the right, now pointing to the left directing the viewer’s eye to the character.

The Sunoco ink blotters are a microcosm of the war effort in the home front. The April 1943 Sunoco ink blotter reflected the rationing instituted across America due to the war. The blotter proclaimed, “REINFORCED for rationed driving, SUNOCO OIL” and featured Donald Duck in knights armor, sword drawn in the air while driving what appears to be a U.S. Army Willy’s Jeep. In the clear space

continued on page 14



Figure 12. A decidedly patriotic symbol of pinning a medal with the word “hero” used in the tagline. The imagery, although referring to the Sunoco fuel product, is symbolic of the fighting men and women serving their country who are the real heroes.

below the image of Donald is the phrase, “Care for your Car...for your Country.” Regardless of whether a person was in the military or supporting the war effort from the home front, every individual, and company for that matter, was pitching in to make a difference during WWII—hence the moniker “*The Greatest Generation*.” These and many other patriotic slogans were everywhere during the war—on posters, signage, in advertisements, pamphlets, and on products of all kinds.

In September 1942, the Sunoco ink blotters were not just selling fuel and car services, but they also feature a “Buy War Bonds” logo in support of funding the war effort.¹⁸ This blotter was advertising “Sunoco Car Saver Service” and featured Donald Duck at an adding machine with the slogan, “Add Years To Your Car’s Life.” The ad copy on these is all straightforward and effective advertising messages on roughly 3 ½’ X 6” blotters that were always handy for blotting fresh ink on newly signed orders, checks, service contracts, or any writing done with a fountain pen during that time. The Rule of Seven in advertising states that seven is the “average number of impressions a brand must make on a member of their target market before making a sale.”¹⁹ Giving blotters away with your product information, especially if it were tied to the famous Disney characters, was a sure way of achieving that view count since these blotters lingered on a desk or counter for weeks.

With WWII in full swing, the ink blotters issued during the war years by Sunoco and others contained at least some reference to the war. Whether it be rationing, war bonds, or just an understandable patriotic feeling, these blotters reflected the *we’re all in this together* attitude towards the war effort. As optimism set in that the Allies would win the war, the word “Hero” appears with Donald Duck pinning a medal onto a Sunoco gas pump. Is it a positive reinforcement that the tide of the war turned and that an end was near because of the hero U.S. military service members fighting overseas? It is

possible since advertising is a timely medium that pivots quickly to capitalize on events of the day. We saw that with 9/11 and are experiencing that recently during the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic.

The absorbent backside of the Sunoco/Disney ink blotters is blue blotter paper. But that was not always the case when blotters became widely used. In the early cotton paper making process, the paper is created using cotton cloth (rags), other fibers, mixed with water and other materials to create the pulp slurry.²⁰ Red, pink, or orange rags were discarded due to the difficulty in getting rid of those colorations. But when the blotter paper was mistakenly made centuries ago, the reddish rags found an excellent use after that. Early examples of ink blotters, for the most part, are pink in color. As the papermaking

process evolved and became industrialized, the blotter color no longer needed to be pink and could be any color desired. The blue of the Sunoco/Disney ink blotters is a complementary color to the often lighter backgrounds found on the front advertisements.

With the invention of Hungarian journalist László Bíró’s ballpoint pen, patented in 1938, the golden age of the fountain pens began to fade away slowly after WWII. By the 1960s, companies like Paper Mate, Parker Pens, and Bic saturated the market with inexpensive disposable pens that were ubiquitous and reliable. The advertising ink blotters faded away with the fountain pen. However, Disney did produce an advertising ink blotter for the release of *Toby Tyler* (1960), a live-action film starring Kevin Corcoran as Toby Tyler. The latter runs away from his foster parents to join the circus where he meets the irresistible chimpanzee, Mr. Stubbs. Beyond that, there is little evidence that ink blotters were used for advertising any other Disney related products after that point.

Fountain pens today are viewed more as a luxury item and status symbol. There is an “air of timeless elegance,



Figure 13. The back of all of the Disney/Sunoco ink blotters were blue. This one shows some fading and discoloration from partial exposure to sunlight. Unlike the advertising side of the blotter, this thin layer of blue paper is highly absorbent and wicks up wet ink quickly, as can be seen in this example.

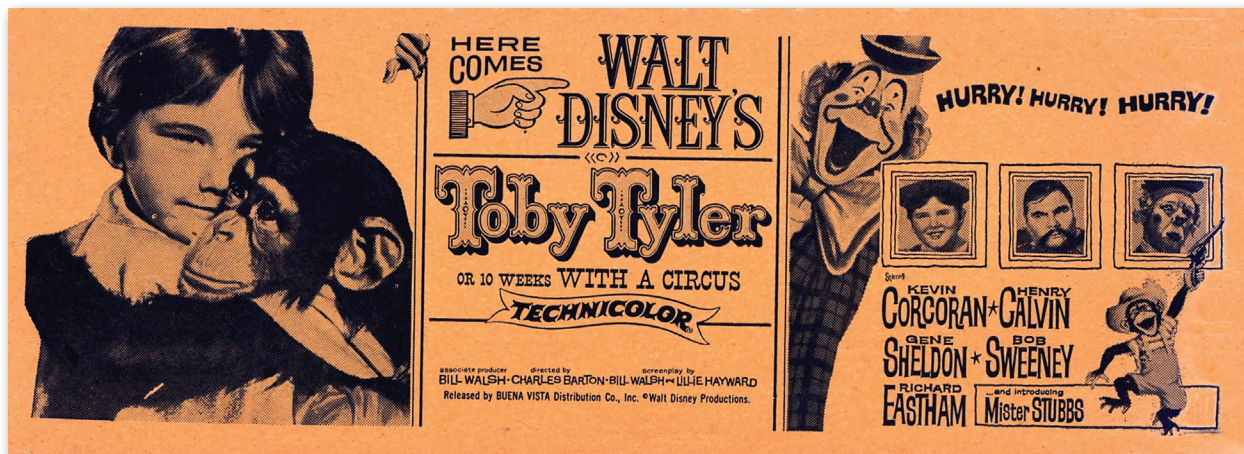


Figure 14. The “Toby Tyler” movie advertisement ink blotter from 1960 is possibly one of the last times that Disney or a Disney movie/characters appeared on an advertising ink blotter. By this time, ballpoint pens were inexpensive, widely available, and very reliable. The usefulness of ink blotters quickly faded by the early 1960s.

personalization, and sentimentality associated with fountain pens” that lacks in the coldness of the computer keyboard or the utilitarianism of a ballpoint pen.²¹ Writing with a fountain pen is a unique sensory experience. You can hear the gliding metal nib over the textured paper as it feeds a thin line of ink out the tip as you feel the gyrating motion of your hand moving about the surface seeing words form, your unique thoughts, permanently captured in time. If the ink were still wet, you would take a moment to use that advertising blotter on your desk to quicken the drying process as you gave thought about the next phrase to write.

Writing by hand used to be almost ritualistic in the days before ballpoint pens, cell phones, and computers. It was a slower time when thought, for a moment, was given before writing a sentence. The Sunoco/Disney ink blotters are a reminder of that bygone era and one of the many everyday items that most never gave much thought to other than a passing glance at the advertisement as they blotted fresh ink. Still, many have survived the passage of time, becoming a collectible form of ephemera, especially the ones that feature the Disney characters. These simple, disposable ink blotters are just another example of the many untold stories still out there in the ephemera and Disney universe.

Endnotes

- ¹ Pen, split nib – Romano-British period, British Museum
- ² Bosworth, *A Mediaeval Islamic Prototype of the Fountain Pen?*, *Journal of Semitic Studies*, 1981, pages 229–234.
- ³ Nishimur, David, *Who Invented The Fountain Pen?* Vintage Pens, 1997.
- ⁴ Rickards, Maurice, *Encyclopedia of Ephemera: A Guide to the Fragmentary Documents of Everyday Life for the Collector, Curator, and Historian*, Routledge 2000, page 55.
- ⁵ Dard Hunter, *Papermaking through Eighteen Centuries*, William Edwin Rudge 1930, page 141.
- ⁶ *Campaign Ink Blotters*, History, Art & Archives: United States House of Representatives, March 12, 2018.
- ⁷ Examples of these are part of a private collection.
- ⁸ Arlington Trust Company of Massachusetts ink blotters, from a private collection.
- ⁹ Based on analysis of the drawings, the Walt Disney signatures, and consultation with Historian and Hank Porter biographer David Lasjak.

- ¹⁰ Correspondence with historian and Hank Porter biographer David Lasjak, July 5, 2020.
- ¹¹ Mickey Mouse Nu-Blue Sunoco Sign: Vintage Disney Licensed Advertising, Art Factory, 2019
- ¹² Invention of the Custom Blending Pump, 1956, www.sunoco.com
- ¹³ Sunoco Ink Blotter, 1938
- ¹⁴ Sunoco Ink Blotter, 1940
- ¹⁵ Sunoco Ink Blotter, 1941
- ¹⁶ Inc., Gallup. *Gallup Vault: A Country Unified After Pearl Harbor*, Dec. 12–17, 1941; Gallup.com.
- ¹⁷ Horne, Alistair, “Payback for Pearl: Doolittle’s Raiders avenged Pearl Harbor by hitting the Japanese where they least expected it—at home,” *MHQ—The Quarterly Journal of Military History*, Spring 2012
- ¹⁸ Sunoco Ink Blotter, 1942
- ¹⁹ Stevens, John, “Using the Rule of 7 to Radically Grow Your Business,” *The Balance/Small Business*, Feb. 04, 2020 www.thebalancesmb.com.
- ²⁰ Hunter, Dard, *Papermaking, the history and technique of an ancient craft*, Dover 1943.
- ²¹ Yoko Hani, “Find out why a fountain pen ‘personalizes’ your prose.” *Japan Times*, Dec.24, 2006.

David A. Bossert, an award-winning artist, filmmaker, and author, is a 32-year veteran of The Walt Disney Company where he contributed his talents to *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* (1988), *The Little Mermaid* (1989), *Beauty and the Beast* (1991), *Aladdin* (1992), *Tim Burton’s The Nightmare Before Christmas* (1993), *The Lion King* (1994), *Fantasia/2000* (1999) among many others. Bossert is now an independent producer, creative director, writer and is considered an authority on Disney art and animation history. He is a member of the CalArts Board of Trustees and is a visiting scholar at Carnegie Mellon University’s Entertainment Technology Center (ETC) in Pittsburgh. Learn more at www.davidbossert.com



Refractions of Cooper in a Nation on the Move

BY MICHAEL LEVERETT DORN

2021 is the bicentennial of the appearance of James Fenimore Cooper's second novel, *The Spy*, a cloak and dagger story set during the American Revolutionary War that launched its author to national and international prominence. Cooper would continue to write for another thirty years, often with the assistance of his daughter Susan Fenimore Cooper. When he passed away in 1851, Susan assumed the role of literary executor for his estate. A life-long competitor for the affections of the reading public, Washington Irving, intoned that Cooper's passing "has left a space in our literature which will not easily be supplied." Irving went on to explain to friends planning the burial and memorial services that he expected to be able to participate, around his monthly meetings with the executors of the Astor estate and the Trustees of the Astor Library (itself established with money raised in Western fur trading). Susan wrote her own books with the encouragement of her father, and later, introductions to authorized printings from the oeuvre as well as a celebratory gift book *Pages and Pictures* (1861) which included not only steel plate engravings but also curated glimpses of the landscape around Cooperstown and Lake Otsego. Without international copyright agreements, however, there was little that Susan Cooper could do to stem the rising tide of Leatherstockings, *Sea Tales* and *Littlepage Manuscripts* that washed across America and its ever-mobile citizenry.

By the year of the country's Centennial celebrations, the Astor Library would have held multiple sets of Cooper's works in different arrangements and combinations. Within the paneled halls of this non-circulating library, but also in steam packets and stagecoaches, Cooper's romantic imagery of Native Americans entered into conversation along with works like John Neal's *Logan* (1822) and Robert Montgomery Bird's *Nick of the Woods* (1837) that were more overtly hostile to the native presence. Land hunger drove a pair of wars with the Seminole Indians of Florida and eventually the displacement of Eastern tribes to "waste" lands in the arid West. Passages from Cooper in their McGuffey Readers taught schoolchildren to recognize both the thrill of frontier adventure and the tragedy of lost innocence. Western prairies and southern swamps described as trackless wastes in works spanning Cooper's career, *The Prairie* of 1827; and, *Jack Tier* of 1848, would no longer impede travel and settlement.

Cooper became a prestige "carry on" in the

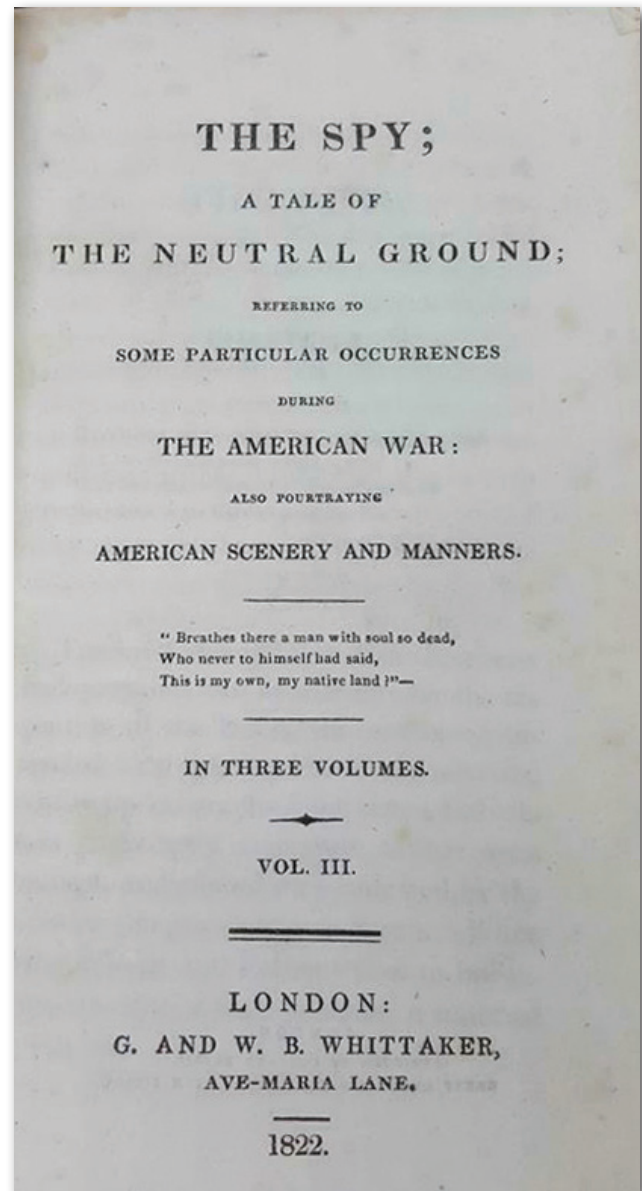


Figure 1. Title page, 1822 London edition of James Fenimore Cooper's *The Spy*. Source: eBay

luggage of rail and steamboat travelers using popular guidebooks such as John Whitney's *Florida Pathfinder ... For the Season of 1874-75*, where the Metropolitan Hotel in Jacksonville advertised easy access to bathing, celebrated Tucker-Springs mattresses for sleeping, as well as common rooms for indoor recreation (reading and billiards). Traveling the Missouri Kansas and Texas Railway through Indian Territory, passengers were served by conductors who could spend their

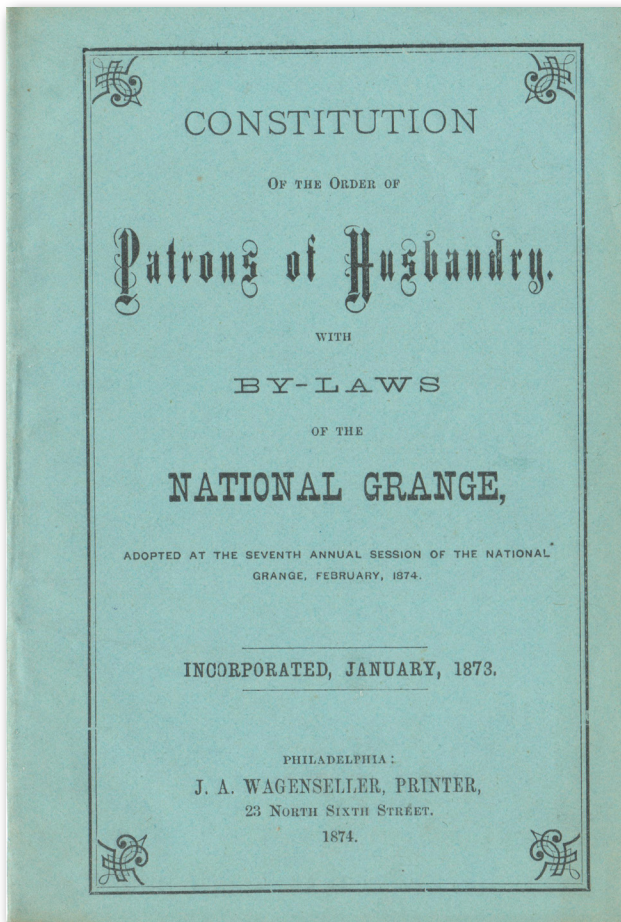


Figure 2. Paper cover, Constitution of the Patrons of Husbandry with By-Laws of the National Grange, J. A. Wagenseller, Philadelphia 1874.

off hours in self-improvement at a dedicated reading room. Speakers on the popular Lyceum lectures and tent revivals enjoined their audiences to reclaim their time and energy, formerly “dissipated” in “dram shops,” at new recreation facilities and reading rooms like the ones sponsored by Ladies’ Temperance clubs in Lawrence and Manhattan, Kansas. Even rural areas heeded the call for improvement. In April of 1874, the Jefferson County Central Council of the Patrons of Husbandry resolved that each person should keep an accurate count of all different varieties of trees and seeds planted for Arbor Day, as well as the mode of planting, for publication in their local newspapers or the *Kansas Farmer* (Lawrence). By the end of that same year, the Lake Grange of Missouri (St. Louis County) already featured a reading room, “where all the leading Agricultural and Grange papers are kept on file,” and the “nucleus” of a library in addition to the ceremonial hall.¹

Lawrence, Kansas, and Omaha, Nebraska, would become financial centers for the farm mortgage lending business. News accounts in 1880 described with alarm the combinations of Eastern capital and Western lawyers striking bargain basement deals in

the halls of power for previously public-domain lands. For this year alone, a digital search found 3,241 hits for the words “conspiracy” and “conspiracies” - and that for the state of Kansas alone!² Helen E. Starrett, the only Kansan to participate in the Kansas woman suffrage campaign of 1869 to eventually vote in 1918, and who married a well-connected Western lawyer, announced in the pages of her *Western Magazine* that Malthusian claims of population increase and resource decline were misplaced: “Take up a map which shows the comparative size of the States and Territories,” she suggested, and “observe that New York and all the New England States could be set down in Dakota, and yet enough space would be left to make a good-sized State.”³ Chicago consolidated its control over Western landscapes in literature as well, not only in the pages of its many cheap magazines, but through its positioning for cheap second-class mail distribution of reprinted American and European classics. Editors of *The Rocky Mountain Husbandman* and *The Omaha Daily Bee* described, and deprecated, how virgin land wrested from Western tribes was being sold off through the administration of Rutherford B. Hayes as “desert land” to land barons/ranchers. Mrs. Starrett, encouragingly: “Indiana and Illinois need not be very close neighbors if both States were set down in [territorial] Montana.” Western women’s clubs could sometimes adopt fanciful names but none more so than the “Hoo-hawsuckjay Club” of El Dorado, Kansas, created by stringing together the first syllable of the assorted nicknames of club participants’ states of origin.⁴

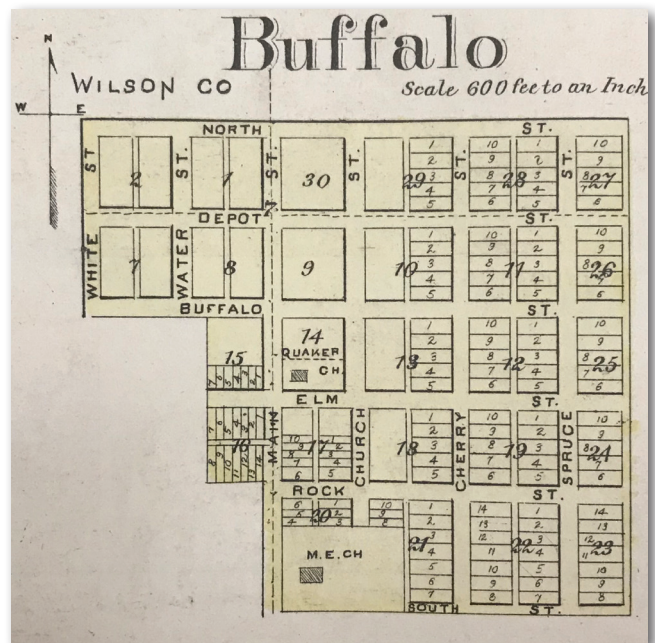


Figure 3. Plat, town of Buffalo, Wilson County, Kansas, L. H. Evert & Co's Official State Atlas of Kansas, Philadelphia 1887.

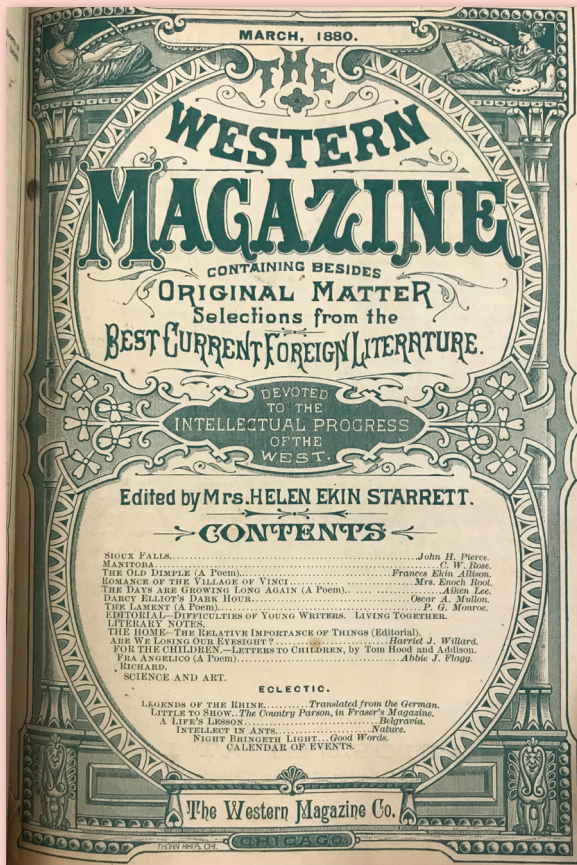


Figure 4. Cover, March 1880 issue of The Western Magazine, edited by Helen Ekin Starrett, Chicago.

BRADFORD MILLER.

MR. JOHN TYLER COOPER, the self nominated anti-prohibitionist candidate for mayor of Atlanta, Ga., is a grand son of President Tyler and also of James Fenimore Cooper.

THE men who are continually stirring up antagonism between capital and labor

Figure 5. Newspaper squib, 1886, John Cooper Tyler's successful run as the 30th mayor of Atlanta, Georgia - he was not related to James Fenimore Cooper.

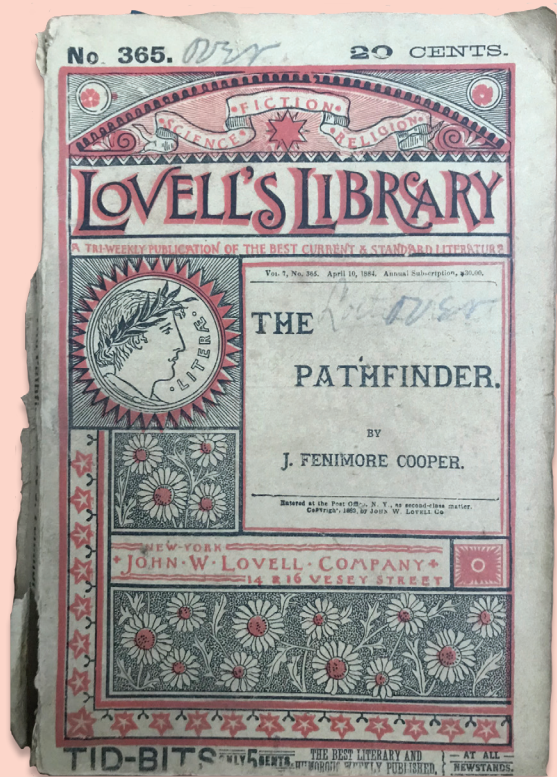


Figure 6. 1884 New York tri-weekly periodical Lovell's Library that featured Cooper's "The Pathfinder: or, the inland sea" in the seventh volume, No. 365, April 10. Of particular interest to Ephemerists, this is an undated reprint made on lower quality paper at Trow's Printing and Bookbinding in New York City using Lovell's plates. Demand for Lovell's Library numbers — especially of Washington Irving, James Fenimore Cooper, and George Eliot — was such that reissues would have been common, sent out to restock the shelves at post offices and dry-goods/drug stores that were known to carry Lovells.

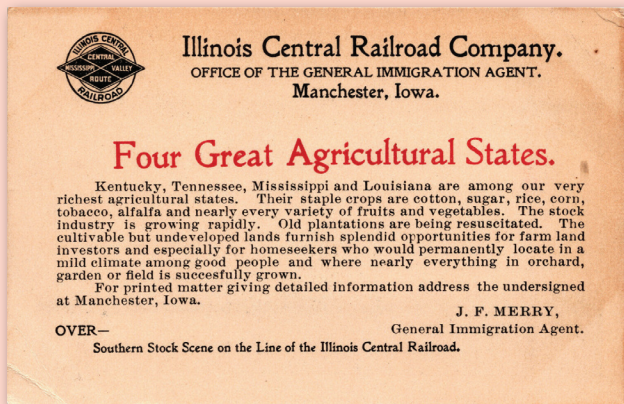


Figure 8. Advertising postal card, J. F. Merry, General Immigration Agent, Illinois Central Railroad, Manchester, Iowa.



Figure 7. Masthead to the Rocky Mountain Husbandman, White Sulphur Springs, Montana Territory, 1880. (newspapers.com)



MALARIA.

THE alarming rapidity with which malaria has been spreading over the country has caused much talk and investigation. It is a malady which not even the most talented physicians are able to fathom. Its cause is in most cases attributable to local surroundings, impure water, marshy ground, &c., but it often appears in places noted for being unusually healthy. Probably no disease has so baffled the investigation of the medical fraternity and few diseases cause more misery. Malaria does not necessarily mean chills and fever, although these troubles usually accompany it, back ache, a tired, weary feeling, lack of energy, aches of all kinds and a sort of despairing misery are the sure indications of malaria. The standard remedy has been quinine, and yet all who have taken this drug know its disagreeable effects, and also are aware that it seldom if ever effects a permanent cure. In fact, the system becomes finally so used to it that even the largest doses fail to give relief. What is wanted is a good health-giving tonic, which will strengthen and build up the system and permanently restore health.

Brown's Iron Bitters, manufactured by Brown Chemical Co., Balto., Md., is such a tonic, and is a sure antidote against malarial poison, fever and ague and other intermittent fevers. It will also cure without doubt Dyspepsia, Indigestion, Liver and Kidney complaints, enriches the blood, tones the nerves, and is especially valuable as a healing and restoring medicine for diseases peculiar to ladies.

BROWN CHEMICAL CO., BALTIMORE, MD.

See that all Iron Bitters are made by Brown Chemical Co., Baltimore, and have crossed red lines and trade-mark on wrapper.

Beware of Imitations.

Figures 9 and 10. Front and back, 1885 trade card lithographed by A. Hoen & Co., for Brown's Iron Bitters, Baltimore — claims relative to the treatment of malaria which was spreading across the country with Western settlement, and especially near water sources impounded for agricultural use.

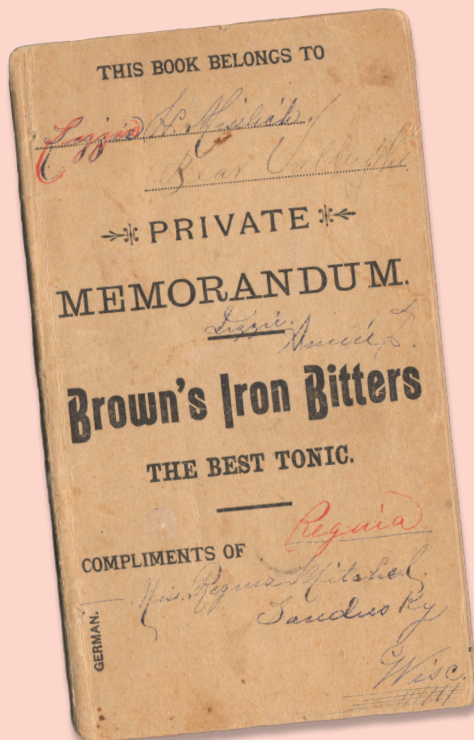
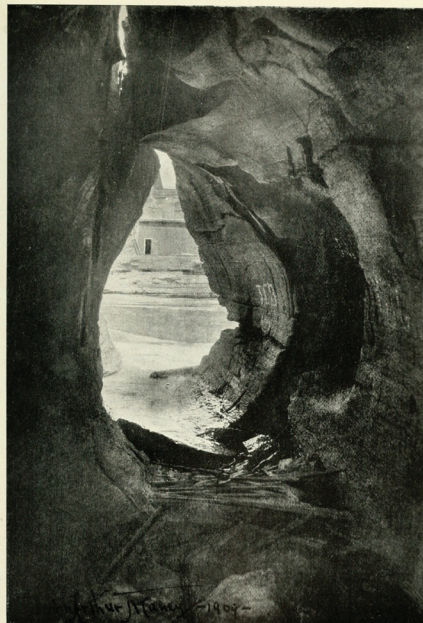


Figure 11. Memorandum booklet, 1885, with advertising testimonials in German to the efficacy of Brown's Iron Bitters, Brown Chemical Co., Baltimore — inscribed in colored inks in two different hands.



In Cooper's Cave, Glens Falls, N. Y.

Figure 12. 1910 photogravure looking out of "Cooper's Cave" — a location featured in *The Last of the Mohicans*. (Library of Congress, loc.gov/item/10013165)

Most Beautiful of Trips *"The Philistine"*

Is that from Niagara Falls via Montreal thru the Magnificent Lake & Mountain Region of Northern New York known as

A Summer Paradise

Reached by the Delaware & Hudson R. R. and the Champlain Transportation Company's Fine Steamers

D. & H. Tickets permit stop-overs at Saratoga Springs, Lake George, Ausable Chasm, Hotel Champlain and other brilliant and famed resorts

A Free copy of 300 page guide book sent on receipt of four cents postage

A. A. HEARD, General Passenger Agent, Albany, N. Y.

Figure 13. 1906 advertisement for the "most beautiful of all trips," placed by The Delaware & Hudson Railway in *The Philistine*, Vol., No. 3, August. (John Alexander, *Books on the Square*, Virden, Ill.)

As pathfinders, Americans drew indelible traces across Cooper's previously trackless Western wastelands, falling prey along the way to a vast array of ills and ailments – not the least among them being loneliness, isolation and loss of community. Cheap print met a variety of these practical needs, replacing the attenuated sense of belonging in newly-settled lands and suggesting commercial *sauves*: pianofortes (grand, square, or upright); and, tonics (whether herbs preserved in alcohol, or byproducts of the brewing process). Regina Mitchel and Lizzie Misslich in Wisconsin's Bear Creek Valley exchanged pleasantries and recipes in a dual-language Brown's Iron Bitters advertising booklet, staying connected as they supported their respective families' passages through fevers, droughts, and storms.

To each American their own *Pathfinder*, but what of Cooper's legacy in his family's ancestral lands? With the aid of support from local landed gentry as well as more distant Clarks, Coopers, and Singers, Lake Otsego had become an American heritage tourist mecca by the turn of the twentieth century. Claims to the Leatherstocking label were local coinage, a resource for tourist promotion. The Upper Susquehanna and Hudson Valleys, however, were now industrialized: Hoosick Falls, claimed resting place of the "real Natty Bumppo," supported the manufacture of mechanized harvesters; the economy of Glens Falls, the location of much of the dramatic action in *Last of the Mohicans*, rose and fell on conversion of timber resources to paper. And so the cycle of settler colonialism continued to turn.

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Endnotes

- ¹ *Sickle & Sheaf*, Oskaloosa, Kan., Sat., Dec.19, 1874, p. 8
- ² 12/27/2020 search on the Newspapers.com digital newspapers portal.
- ³ *Western Magazine*, July 1880, Chicago, Ill., as reprinted in *The Somerset Press*, Somerset, O., Thu., Jul 08, 1880, p. 1
- ⁴ *Walnut Valley Times*, El Dorado, Kan., Fri., Sept. 23, 1887, p. 3

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Loose Women: Constraints and Conventions of Victorian Undergarments

BY BARBARA RUSCH

The Victorians – the word conjures up images of repressed sexuality, moral rigidity and a smug complacency, and has come to represent all those fanatically righteous attitudes which the world has discarded once and for all. It was a time when women were regarded as either angels or seductresses, and the difference straddled a very fine line. In no small measure, their virtue became inextricably linked to their intimate wardrobe, both in the literal and metaphorical sense the underpinnings of its social construct. We need only peel back the layers of deceptively frilly and apparently innocuous apparel to understand how it came to represent the very foundations upon which Victorian morality hung.

While women's lingerie ostensibly serves the purposes of hygiene, warmth, protecting the wearer's modesty, shaping the body and providing support, its implications are so much broader. Never was this more evident than during the 19th



Figure 1. 1830s Carte Porcelaine (engraved on stone and printed on white lead coated stock card) by Hannotiau in Brussels, advertising the lingerie store of the sisters of J. Alloncius. In the 1830s and 1840s women were expected to dress like little dolls swathed in undergarments, flounces and frills, some of which are pictured here.



Figure 2. 1850s print, lithographed by C.J. Calliford, published in London by W.H.I. Carter. The four questions posed by the younger sister illustrate objections to the voluminous cage crinoline - a woman looks foolish, a father would like to forbid them, and small dogs might get lost underneath. In the late 1850s, Carter published many satirical prints with the crinoline as subject.

century. Victorian advertising, and especially the colorful imagery printed on the trade cards widely distributed by manufacturers and retailers, are a particularly effective means of conveying the socio-sexual narrative of women's undergarments, reflecting and reinforcing the pernicious precepts of the prevailing popular culture.

Like the role of women themselves, their "unmentionables" (the Victorians being too prudish to even mention the word underwear) saw an evolution throughout the reign of Queen Victoria between 1837-1901, when the dawn of a new age was about to begin. From crinolines to corsets, from bloomers to bustles, from petticoats to pantaloons, the changing fashions in personal garb coincided with evolving attitudes towards women and the role they played in society. Form and function were often at odds, an expression of the push and pull of class, gender, social exigencies and sexual constraints, much of it determined by and subject to the petty tyranny of the prurient Victorian male gaze.

continued on page 22



Figure 3. 1875 chromolithographed trade card by Donaldson Brothers, NY, designed for the Bortree Manufacturing Company, Jackson, Michigan. The model is drawn to resemble a goddess, with a 'Greek' hairdo, and opulent jewelry to emphasize her worth. The adjustable corset was made without bones at the hip line (the ad text implies that such bones tend to break).

Ponderous Petticoats

During the first decades of the century, women's clothing was loose and worn fairly close to the body. But as Victoria's crown was placed upon her little head and the heavy robes of state were lowered onto her narrow shoulders for the first time, women were becoming enveloped in multiple layers of flannel, cotton and lace, their concealed petticoats reflective of the outward indicators of wealth and material success, which translated quite literally into extraneous material – up to fifteen yards of it in circumference and quite as many pounds in weight – stuffed beneath enormously wide skirts. A description of 1856 reads:

"The underclothing of a lady of fashion consists of long drawers trimmed with lace, a flannel petticoat, an under-petticoat three and a half yards wide, a petticoat wadded to the knees, and stiffened on the upper part with whalebones inserted a handsbreadth from one another, a white starched petticoat with three stiffly starched flounces, two muslin petticoats, and finally the dress."

In addition to dragging up filth from the street, they were liable to be trampled on and awkward to move around in

while negotiating small rooms. They also posed a significant threat to the bric-a-brac which adorned the occasional tables in Victorian front parlors.

Crinolines, Cages and Class

Enter the crinoline, considerably less cumbersome and heavy, though hardly taking up any less real estate. In fact, it widened the circumference of a woman's body by another few yards, encasing her in a virtual bubble of fabric. According to one contemporary fashion maven, the crinoline consisted of a "light metal or whalebone structure in which hoops were placed horizontally one above the other and held together by curved ribs" or by way of a complicated series of metal hinges. There are records of rubber tubes being used to form a bell-like framework inflated by means of a bellows and deflated to enable the wearer to sit down. Presumably one had to carry the bellows about in order to re-inflate the apparatus when the lady stood up again. Though no doubt



Figure 4. 1880 chromolithographed flyer for the Worcester Corset Co., Worcester, Massachusetts. Their corset was patented and the name "Queen Bess" trademarked in 1877. The two models have elaborate Elizabethan-style ruff collars inspired by the name of the corset - the implication is that wearers partake of royal fashion. The back of the corset is shown, as it has a bustle roll at the waist to support the weight of the fullness to the back of the skirt - "allows more or less elasticity in walking, and is by far the most comfortable corset and skirt supporter ever introduced."

an engineering marvel, it did little to alter the fashion trend of the tiny waist set atop ballooning skirts. Essentially, the crinoline served as a gilded cage, while the woman, like some exotic, fluttery bird, was held captive within.

And yet, there was method to the madness, safeguarding a woman's virtue by keeping her limbs (not her legs, considered too provocative a descriptor) concealed, and men, along with their evil thoughts, at bay, serving a similar function as the chastity belt of centuries earlier as a means of securing the property that belonged exclusively to one's husband.

The crinoline was hailed as an immense improvement over the bulky and heavy layers of the petticoat for its lightness and the comparative freedom of movement it afforded. Even Queen Victoria admired the fashion device, said to have been introduced to England on a visit by the Empress Eugénie in April, 1855, but it had its detractors.

As the new contraption gained momentum, it became quite as unmanageable as the petticoat of previous decades. Maneuvering through narrow doorways could be something of a challenge, while a ride on an omnibus could occasion disastrous, if comical, results. The satirical magazine *Punch* suggested, somewhat facetiously, that crinolines ought to be removed and hung on the exterior of the vehicle. While servants did wear a modified version of the crinoline, the expanse of skirt was very much indicative of the class, wealth and status of the wearer. In both the United States and England, the greater the circumference, the higher a lady's rung on the social ladder.

But the consequences could be disastrous, if not tragic. Crinolines, like the petticoats before them, posed a very real danger to those who approached too near the fireplace, only to have all those layers of fabric go up in flames, along with the lady enveloped within them. Such was the case with two half-sisters of Oscar Wilde, whose crinolines caught fire at an Irish ball in 1871, costing both their lives. Ten years earlier, in Massachusetts, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's wife Frances Appleton died after sustaining burns when her dress caught fire.

Corsets: Compression, Oppression and Obsession

But perhaps no other article of intimate apparel came to define the "female form divine," and the role of women who wore it, than the corset. If the hooped cage of the crinoline was a step up from the mummy's bandages of the petticoat, the corset, with its tight laces and vertical stays reinforced with whalebone and steel, was nothing short of an ambulatory prison cell. Though manufacturers emphasized the comfort, convenience and improving qualities of its 'garments' (another underwear euphemism), for the purposes of supporting organs, improving posture and aiding in hygiene, they were as uncomfortable and inconvenient as may be imagined, if not downright dangerous. A stifling and debilitating form of body armor, women found themselves clad within its constraints not for their own protection, but to assuage the insecurities of the fragile male ego, their lives as proscribed and circumscribed as their waistlines. In an age when children were regarded as miniature adults, little girls as young as six or seven were subjected to the tortures of the



Figure 5. 1898 folding card, American Lithographic Co. N.Y., for the S.H. & M. Skirt Binding, patented in Canada in 1898. The image was patented by Albert Operti in 1892 (Operti, 1852-1927, was an Italian immigrant and polar expeditionary artist). The well-corseted model, perched on a backless chair that allowed for fullness of skirts, reveals her solution to the problem of wearing long trailing skirts in the real world — giving a tantalizing glimpse of her petticoat at the same time. A sample of the reinforcing hem binding is affixed to the card.

decorative strait jacket endured by their mothers, justified, incredibly, by its salutary effects, the notion being that if they were fitted out while they were still growing, it would be less painful by the time they were fully grown. The result was that the corset gained steadily in popularity after the Great Exhibition in 1851, where over thirty displays of various designs could be viewed.

Far from being a healthful item of a woman's wardrobe or a mere slimming article of apparel, within its laces and stays lurked an entire socio-sexual phenomenon. Like other restrictive Victorian clothing, it mirrored the repressive and inflexible society which promoted it. What was the rationale behind the pushing, padding and compressing of a woman's body? Firstly, for the aspirational aristocrat, the corset was, like the crinoline, a guise of wealth. Since it made bending, stooping and picking up extremely difficult, it suggested that those who wore it had servants employed for this function.

Further, it accentuated those areas of the woman's body which differentiated it from a man's. With the bosom raised up, the waist cinched, and along with the bustle, the derriere emphasized, the result was the delineation of the hour-glass figure, essentially creating a caricature of the female form with an enlarged bosom and pelvis, delivering a subliminal message as to a woman's fecundity and suitability for childbearing.

The Bustle Unbundled

The bustle was in itself a kind of extension of the corset. According to legend, around 1870, the great couturier Charles Worth saw a servant scrubbing down the steps outside her master's house who had hitched up the back of

her dress, bunching it up and tucking it into her waistband. He found the result enchanting – *et voilà* – the latest fashion craze or craziness – was born. The bustle consisted of a kind of padded steel cage projecting out of the rear of the dress. Early on in its evolution extending down to the back of the knees, by the 1880s this unsightly protuberance resembled nothing so much as an extended shelf upon which it was said a tea tray could safely be balanced.

At the time of the celebration of Queen Victoria's 50th year on the throne in 1887, a Golden Jubilee musical bustle worn by British subjects in India played "God Save the Queen" whenever the wearer sat down. Given that one must stand during the playing of the national anthem, the wearer of Jubilee bustle must have been constantly popping up and down!

Goddesses or Whores

There was an ironic moral contradiction inherent in the wearing of the corset and bustle. In the 19th century, women were regarded as either goddesses or whores. To be "tight-laced" was to be respectable; to be "unlaced" was to be literally a "loose woman," the original meaning of the phrase. A woman's virtue was compromised in equal measure to the loosening of her corsets and stays. Those who endured its agonies and subjected themselves to its indignities were admired, even worshipped. Contemporary advertising consistently depicted angels and cherubs alongside women in corsets, while those who chose to ignore its precepts were knocked off their pedestal and cast out from the acceptable social order into a social wilderness.

And there was no middle ground. The corset became the determining factor and ultimate manifestation of respectability – the literal and metaphorical "upholder" of middle class values. But because it so graphically delineated the lines of the body, it was also sexually provocative, ironically infusing a decidedly erotic – even salacious – element into its use. The breasts were raised up over the top of the bodice, especially in evening clothes, and with any heavy breathing (given that breathing was possible at all), would visibly heave up and down. Little wonder that women in love were thought to be so attractive. The ardor of which poets wrote with such reverence was more a result of the undulating bosom than of palpitating hearts.

Naturally, the Victorian male, who had a more pronounced predilection for the corset than its victims, had little sympathy for the suffering they endured. In a letter written to *The Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine*, a man representative of his time offered the following sadistic assessment:

"There is something extraordinarily fascinating in the thought that a young girl has for many years been subjected to the strictest disciplines of the corset. If she has suffered, as I have no doubt she has, great pain from their extreme pressure, it must be quite made up to her by the admiration her figure excites."

The message on one particular trade card says it all: "Woman has no higher mission than to be beautiful." But, not unlike today, it was the kind of beauty which can never be fully attained, undoubtedly leaving many young women feeling inadequate and unworthy.



Figure 6. 1895 one of the many humorous stereopticon photographs that dressed the bicycling new woman in voluminous bloomers who leaves domestic chores to her husband. Copyright by William H. Ray, published by Berry, Kelley & Chadwick, in Chicago, and sold there as well as in Dallas TX and Augusta GA.

Discipline was a word often associated with the corset. The implication was that mortification of the flesh, somewhat akin to a hair shirt, was somehow grist for the soul and helped contain an over-zealous personality. And what mattered a woman's comfort and health when measured against her spiritual salvation?

Though it may well have been as exacting as a religion and as regulatory as a government, the corset was hardly regarded as a blessing by all women. Viewed as a physical distortion of the female form, the practice was condemned by doctors, as well as the Rational Dress Movement. Everyone knew where Orson Fowler stood on the issue, given the title of his 1846 treatise entitled, *Tight Lacing, Founded on Physiology and Phrenology; or the Evils Inflicted on the Mind and Body by Compressing the Organs of Animal Life, Thereby Retarding and Enfeebling the Vital Functions.*

Change Undergarments and Change the World

Despite the rigidity, both physical and psychological, placed upon those who conformed to the restrictions and conventions of Victorian undergarments, there were those who had the vision and the courage to defy them, and with their defiance enjoyed remarkable success and unheard-of achievements. The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood painted such women in loose-fitting robes and flowing gowns.

Amelia Bloomer, fierce advocate of women's rights, the elective franchise and the Temperance Movement, was the first woman to publish a newspaper specifically for women, called *The Lily*. She popularized the article of apparel which bore her name, though it was actually created by Elizabeth Smith Miller, who in 1851 wore it on a visit to Seneca Falls, New York, seat of the women's rights movement. Amelia Bloomer instantly recognized its potential to free women from the constraints and folly of conventional fashion. Though

hardly a radical concept by today's standards, at the time the garment was mocked as immodest and hideous. Men especially reviled the bloomers, with their flaring skirts reaching below the knees, under which baggy, Turkish-style pantaloons extended to the ankle, as an attempt by women to "wear the trousers" in the family. Once again, common sense was lost out to the male gaze. Though they had their champions, bloomers quickly lost momentum.

By the 1890s, recreational cycling had become all the rage, providing a wholesome form of exercise in the open air. But for women, the issues revolving around the new craze were far more complex. Champion of female suffrage Susan B. Anthony wrote:

"The bicycle has done more to emancipate women than any one thing in the world. I rejoice every time I see a woman ride on a bike. It gives her a feeling of self-reliance and independence the moment she takes her seat; and away she goes, the picture of untrammelled womanhood."

Fellow suffragist Elizabeth Cady Stanton declared that "Woman is riding to suffrage on the bicycle." Reported the *Nebraska Courier* in 1895, "The bicycle has taken old-fashioned, slow-going notions of the gentler sex and replaced them with the New Woman, mounted on her steed of steel." At the opposite end of the gender rights spectrum was the *Sunday Herald* of 1891, which spat, "I think the most vicious thing I ever saw in all my life is a woman on a bicycle — and Washington is full of them. I had thought that cigarette smoking was the worst thing a woman could do, but I have changed my mind."

The act of cycling not only democratized travel, but became an instrument of change, an enormous cultural and political force, an emblem of women's rights and something of a rallying cry for the entire suffrage movement. Cycling also provided a hygienic validation for discarding excess and restrictive clothing, both inside and out. The result was the resurgence of the previously ridiculed bloomers, now acknowledged as more appropriate cycling attire - yet they again had detractors. The *Yorkville Enquirer* advised its readers in unambiguous terms that "a beautiful woman is beautiful in any dress, an ugly one had better take care, while short, thick, fat folks must beware of Bloomers." Those who disregarded their admonitions risked being subjected to "the stare of the stranger, the leer of the passer-by, the significant smile of the idler, the shrug of the staid folk, and the cutting remark." A writer in *The Cosmopolitan* concurred: "The tendency for the bloomer costume must be deprecated." In 1895, under the headline "The Pneu-Matic Woman," the *Freeland Tribune* reported on a broken engagement when the young man ordered his fiancée to dismount and return indoors to change into skirts or "the marriage would not take place, as he drew the line at bloomers on a bike." The young lady, a "pneu" woman in every sense, promptly removed her diamond ring and handed it to him, stating emphatically that she would not discard bloomers for him or anyone else."

Numerous sermons delivered from pulpits across the country exhorted women to abandon their sinful ways along with the "indecicate and unwomanly conduct" making her "despised in the eyes of all people of virtuous sensibilities." Such views were uppermost in the minds of the board of

trustees at the College Point seminary in Flushing, New York, when they decided in 1895 to ban teachers from riding bicycles to and from school. Though the ladies in question wore skirts, the board feared that "if we don't stop them now they will want to be in style with the New York women and wear bloomers ... we are determined to stop our teachers in time before they go that far." Cycling, together with the indecent apparel associated with it, was, according to one board member, "conducive to the creation of immoral thoughts."

Notwithstanding this ubiquitous condemnation, once unbound, women's participation in recreational activities mirrored their progress from the confines of the Victorian parlor to the larger world, leading to tangible gains in equality. In a sense, the path to women's emancipation began from the bottom up, from the top down, and from the inside out.



Barbara Rusch, is the founder of The Ephemera Society of Canada, serving as its president and editor of its publication for over seventeen years. She has been honored with the Rickards Award, the Samuel Pepys Medal, and the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal for her cultural contributions to Canada. She is listed in *Canadian Who's Who* as its only ephemerist, and writes, lectures and exhibits regularly on everything Victorian.

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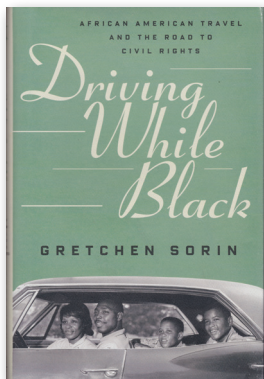
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Book Reviews

Driving While Black: African American Travel and the Road to Civil Rights, by Gretchen Sorin, 2020



The PBS documentary, *Driving While Black*, emphasized racial profiling on American highways—a national shame that continues to dominate news coverage. The film accompanied Gretchen Sorin’s book that, as a history, is more nuanced. In her account, travel was transformative—“the automobile supported travel for blacks in private, comfortable circumstances, but it also required new thinking and habits.” And, not just travel,

car ownership opened careers as a chauffeur or truck driver—Booker T. Washington calling it second only to the mule in helping the Negro achieve independence.

Sorin’s text is accompanied by photographs and ephemera gleaned from many archives, as well as from her own collection. The captions are mini-essays, such as the observation that an Oldsmobile 88 was a good choice for African-Americans who needed fast acceleration away from potential trouble. Sorin’s own family chose a 1957 Ford station wagon, “its trunk and backseat packed with fried chicken, brownies, coloring books, and pillows for sleeping [making] the trip from New Jersey back to Fayetteville, North Carolina, each summer.”

A whole chapter is devoted to *The Negro Motorist Green Book*, examples of which are now difficult to find despite the thousands distributed from 1936 to 1966 (1940 and 1948 issues are reproduced from the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library). The arc of Sorin’s narrative leads to civil rights legislation that opened public accommodations to African Americans - but that also meant the loss of many black business, as well as the failure of these businesses to attract a white audience: our failure to become one nation.

In an epilogue Sorin admits her fear of the police, especially on behalf of her son behind the wheel of a car. She records some of the studies with data about a culture in which police were “inclined to interpret the exercise of free-speech rights as unlawful disobedience, innocent movements as physical threats, indications of mental or physical illness as belligerence.” Sorin’s hope is that her book adds to a national dialogue - including in an appendix recommendations from the director of the ACLU Racial Justice Program; from a Police Commander in Montreal, for an outsider’s perspective (blaming automobile patrolling for police isolation from communities they serve); from the Operations Director at the Alabama Humanities Foundation; from the Clarence J. Robinson Professor of Criminology, Law and Society at George Mason University.

In her acknowledgments, Sorin writes: “And thanks also to The Ephemera Society of America. The society supported my research travel with the Philip Jones Fellowship for the Study of Ephemera, and Philip Jones and his family offered ongoing enthusiasm for the topic.” Sorin’s award was in 2009, and *The*

Ephemera Journal Volume 13 in 2010 carried an article on her research, “The Negro Motorist Green-Book, The most important book needed for Negroes who traveled anywhere in the United States.” Sorin’s is an important book, our contribution something to be proud of.

The Art of Advertising by Julie Anne Lambert, 2020 (\$45 through the Bodleian shop)



The extraordinarily rich John Johnson Collection of Printed Ephemera at Oxford’s Bodleian Library at last has a handsomely-produced book worthy of curator Julie Anne Lambert’s decades of promotion. Designed to accompany a major exhibition of the same name (which has been extended until the Spring of 2021) this has the appearance of another lush coffee-table tome, but the text has been

supplied by Lambert herself, and by Michael Twyman (Emeritus Professor of Typography & Graphic Communications at the University of Reading), Lynda Mugglestone (Professor of the History of English at Oxford University), Helen Clifford (curator of the Swaledale Museum whose specialty is the material culture and manufactures of the 17th and 18th centuries), Ashley Jackson (Professor of Imperial and Military History at King’s College London) and David Tomkins (a Bodleian Library project manager). Instead of being organized thematically, or by ephemera type (as are most books on ephemera), the writers address three broad subjects: the genesis of an advertisement (with printing techniques, language, art, and ways/means of attracting consumers), the consumers themselves and where they buy, and social history. This last section is led by a thought-provoking essay by Lambert, “Mirror of Society?” that tackles the questions of hyperbole and language of obfuscation. After a section on images of Britain and Empire, Lambert closes the volume with a close look at how ephemera informs local history. Endnotes, a bibliography and index round off the 255 pages.

The images are necessarily of British products, and it is intriguing to see how differently they were promoted—or how similarly—to American. The indefatigable Johnson (1882-1956) amassed over a million items; Lambert has chosen a broad range both in chronology and content. The captions to images are exemplary—giving details of printing, size, and how to access within the collection, but also adding to one’s appreciation for the content. For instance, image 7.4 under Social History, *Mirror of Society?* is described: “Advertisers seized on the bicycle as a symbol of modernity, especially when ridden by women, to whom bicycling was a means of liberation. Producers of biscuits and certain beverages (including cocoa) marketed new and existing products for the refreshment of cyclists. Stowe’s lime cordial styled itself as ‘the only healthy beverage that can be safely taken after cycling or other exercise.’ The cyclist’s attire approaches in spirit that of the ‘new woman’, with her jaunty hat and show of ankle. Chromolithography, the black working photomechanical (c.1895), 190 x 130 mm. JJ Soft Drinks 2 (23)”



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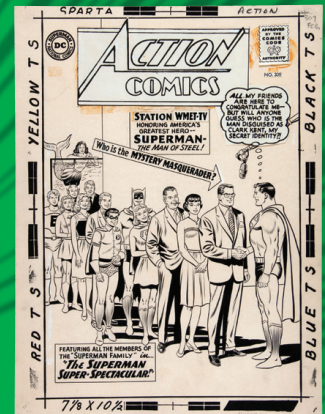
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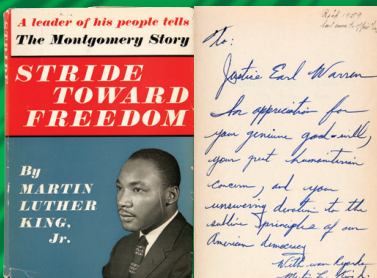
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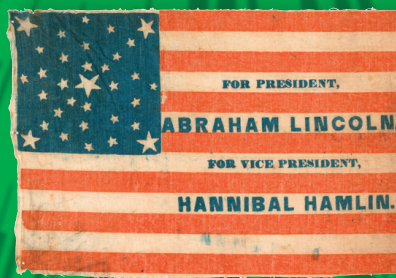
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