

# THE EPHEMERA JOURNAL

VOLUME 23, NUMBER 3

MAY 2021

## Advancing on a Michigan Farm

By DAVID KEMLER

*"We can offer no better evidence of the high mechanical perfection, excellent efficiency and operative economy of Advance machinery than the fact that we are one of the largest producers of threshing machinery in the world, and have many thousands of machines in active operation on every part of the globe, every day in the year."*

—From the 1910 Advance Thresher Catalog

The Advance Threshing Company grew in Battle Creek, Michigan out of the successes of other farm implement makers. In 1851, John Nichols (1814-1891) and David Booth Shepard (1820-1904) established a modern foundry and blacksmith shop, Nichols & Shepard. In 1858, Shepard designed a threshing machine that won the premium award at the 1861

*Continued on Page 4*



Figure 1. The Advance Thresher Company, founded in Battle Creek, Michigan, in 1881 used an image of a youth carrying a banner through the mountains in all of its advertising (here decorating the front of the steam engine on the cover of a 1911 trade catalog, and on the back cover of the 1910 edition, chromolithographed by Gies & Co., Buffalo NY). The narrative behind the scene was from an 1841 nine-verse poem by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow called *Excelsior* - and variations on the youth and his banner, usually reading *Excelsior* but here interpreted as *Advance*, were used by many manufacturers (see article by Richard Dana Sheaff, *The Ephemera Journal*, Volume 16, Number 2 January 2014, page 20).

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# The Ephemera Journal

The  
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Society  
of America

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## Members and Friends

Here in the Spring of 2021 pent up demand for live, in-person shows and events dominates the thoughts of most of us. We *need* to hunter-gather! We find ourselves scouring each Upcoming Events list for favorite shows which might actually take place again. In fact some *are* beginning to happen: a live antique glass and bottle show was held last weekend in New Jersey, and enthusiasts from several states headed on off to The Garden State.

Your Society has finalized the details for an in-person 2022 conference and fair! The event will take place March 18-20, 2022 at the Hyatt Regency in Old Greenwich, CT. Our fine promoter, Marvin Getman of Impact Events, has also generously agreed to make our familiar paper show once again a reality for us, even though—given the success of his virtual online platform—he is otherwise planning not to stage live shows going forward. Starting this coming August, working with Marvin, we plan to offer two virtual presentations plus an online ephemera fair, with ESA-members-only early admission the evening before. This is likely to become an annual (or possibly more regular) additional member benefit. Our speakers on August 13th will be Paul Erickson, Director of the Clements Library at the University of Michigan, who will discuss the power of ephemera for researchers, and ESA Board member Beth Carroll-Horrocks, who has built a personal collection of some 18,000 assorted rulers since 1986, most on paper. Beth will show-and-tell some favorites, and also explore the organization of a collection of this size.

We will soon schedule this year's annual members' meeting, via Zoom, where we can answer your questions about any of these events.

The Society's recent 2021 virtual conference, *Women Exceeding Expectations*, went remarkably well. Your Conference Committee and especially committee Chair Barbara Loe, managed on short notice to learn how to do such a thing, and presented two speakers in January plus seven more over two days in March. The Board of Directors has gratefully

expressed its admiration and thankfulness to Barbara in several ways, including awarding her the Society's special and rarely awarded *Certificate of Gratitude*. Thank you Barbara!

More folks than ever before signed up for and attended this year's online conference presentations, which was most gratifying. If there was any disappointment at all, it was that—rather to our surprise and despite being asked—very few viewers made a voluntary financial contribution during or after the event. (It is not too late to step up!)

Fortunately, though, your Society has thus far weathered the stresses and strains of the pandemic well. Thanks to generous members who made increased donations in 2020, to a sharp 2021 increase in membership and to careful management by Treasurer Henry Voigt, our modest finances are currently sound. But please . . . we need strong and continuing support for our programs and missions. If you value what we do, please be supportive.

In closing, you all know that we lost our dear friend Al Malpa in February, and that before he passed, the Society awarded him our Rickards medal. A fine talk about ephemera which Al delivered to his local historical society in 2019 can be enjoyed at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Xig17wEyOk&t=148s](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Xig17wEyOk&t=148s)

*Dick*

Richard Sheaff, President



## Thank you to....

...Barbara J. Loe and Mary Beth Malmshemer. Organizing a conference is difficult, even under the best of circumstances. The Ephemera Society's 2020 conference on the topic "Women Challenging Expectations" was cancelled because of the corona virus outbreak—then at its beginning, and the took on a new format in March 2021; Virtual. Under the careful direction of Barbara J. Loe, Chair of the Ephemera Society's Program Committee, and our Administrative Director Mary Beth Malmshemer, the re-incarnated conference went off in a spectacular fashion.



Barbara coordinated the shaping of the conference topic and the initial call for papers, gathered and made available to committee members all of the submitted papers, created a schedule for the two-day event and a practice webinar in late 2020, chaired numerous committee meetings on Zoom, found the perfect Q&A wrangler (Michael Peich), figured out how to fit speakers and committee members in multiple time zones into rehearsals and the live presentations, and the oversaw an event that was successful in every aspect. Mary Beth, with her usual calm and efficient organizational skills, worked with Barbara, the board of directors, the planning committee, members old and new, and the ephemera fair vendor to make sure that all of pieces worked well together. And they did. Under their guidance, we have a new standard for excellence for our upcoming conferences.

## Board of Directors Slate

The individuals listed below were nominated and approved by the board of directors to begin serving on January 1, 2022:

David Lilburne — President  
Beth Carroll-Horrocks — Vice President  
John Sayers — Treasurer  
Lorna Condon — 2nd term  
Elizabeth Pope — 2nd term

### New Board Members:

James Arsenault  
Tom Horrocks  
Barbara Loe

## In this Issue...

A theme for this issue - and one that is key to any serious collection - is the ultimate repository for the ephemera we have saved.

The **Kemler** family of our cover story is unusually fortunate in that four generations appreciate the Advance Thresher collection, not solely for its attractive and informative ephemera, but for the 'hands-on' hobby it supports.

**Barbara Charles** and Bob Staples followed up with The Library Company on the idea that Bob's metamorphic trade card collection would well suit their visual history holdings — a good example of intelligent networking.

Collectors have often been chary of donation to an institution, fearing that items would be merely warehoused. Those who gave to the Peabody-Essex collections over the years would be very pleased to know that two young archivists were mining their ephemeral material, and elevating it through research and exhibition. We asked **Hannah Swan** to write us a biographical journey with ephemera that led her to more deeply appreciate the archives at the Phillips Library. And we asked **Sarah Bilotta** to write about her personal enthusiasm for Art Nouveau advertising during the bicycle craze at the beginning of the long 20th century.

Visiting David Kemler's threshers in Michigan in October 2019 was the last in person highlight of the Ephemera Society; but the other articles connect to our active 'virtual year.' Barbara and Erika gave a webinar on the acquisition of the metamorphic collection; both Hannah and Sarah have been blogging about what they discover in the Phillips collection; and **Dick Sheaff** was moved to write about a terrific piece of ephemera he bought at one of the first virtual ephemera fairs. Dick has chosen to share his collection as broadly as possible through a fine web site: [www.sheaff-ephemera.com](http://www.sheaff-ephemera.com), which you all should visit!

Our very successful two-part virtual conference involved Herculean efforts on the part of committee chair Barbara Loe and the rest of her team. 465 people registered to watch the virtual presentations, and 104 new members signed up leading up to and during the virtual fair. We survived the pandemic in style! And, I want to emphasize that Barbara has been the lead person for all of our conferences since 2015 (not to mention the other ways that she has helped with the work of the Society).

—Diane DeBlois, editor



Figure 2. Factory workers ca1910 proudly draped over the Advance thresher - the front boiler door is embossed with the company name and Battle Creek Mich., rather than embellished with the Advance logo.

San Joaquin Valley Fair in California, and was patented under the name “Vibrator” that same year. Competition in the threshing machine business began when William Brown (1811-1880) manufactured threshers in Battle Creek in 1851; James Stephen Upton (1831-1899) joined Brown in 1858 to form Upton, Brown & Co. which made a machine called the “Michigan Sweepstakes.” With more capital investment, the Upton Mfg Co. was incorporated in 1874.

In 1880, Nichols & Shepard employee Constantius G. Case (1828-1888) received a patent that improved on the Vibrator. In the same year, another Nichols & Shepard employee, Elon A. Marsh received a patent for a steam engine reverse valve gear, giving half of this patent to fellow employee Minard “Old Judge” LeFever (1847-1921). Nichols & Shepard successfully won the right to use its employees’ invention on its threshing machines. Disgruntled, the two inventors quit and were hired by the Upton Mfg Co.

In 1881, Case also left Nichols & Shepard to begin building threshers in a small shop of his own. In March 1881, Lovett J. Willard (ca1833-1887) borrowed \$7,000 so he could help finance the work. Case’s brother-in-law Thurlow W. Case (1838-1920) was a

leading machinist for Upton’s threshers and, looking to improve his relative’s business, hired Marsh and LeFever away from Upton. Willet W. Briggs (1844-1900) a blacksmith at the Nichols & Shepard Company, was signed on as foreman and “ironed” the first machine built at the factory. Minard LaFever became the factory superintendent. The demand for the Case product led to the organization of a stock company and, in 1883, to the building of a large brick factory on fifty acres in the western part of Battle Creek, alongside the tracks of the Michigan Central, Grand Trunk Western, and the Cincinnati Northern Railroads.

In 1884, the Upton company accepted a bid to relocate their factory to Port Huron, leaving the Battle Creek field to the Case & Willard Manufacturing Company. They exhibited their Advance separator at the Indiana State Fair that year.

In 1886 the company officially changed its name from the Case & Willard Thresher Company to the Advance Thresher Company, with a capital stock of a million and a half dollars. Ammi Willard Wright (1822-1912), a wealthy lumberman, capitalist and



David estimates that about 400 engines survive.

At the time of the Advance Thresher's sale in 1911, the company had 28 distributing houses: Columbus OH, Crowley LA, Dallas TX, Decatur IL, Des Moines IA, El Reno OK, Indianapolis IN, Kansas City MO, Lincoln NE, Longmont CO, Madison WI, Minneapolis MN, Fargo ND, Grand Forks ND, Watertown SD, Aberdeen SD, Sioux Falls SD, Nashville TN, Portland OR, St. Louis MO, Billings MT, Spokane WA, Bozeman MT, Stockton CA, John Dunn Son & Co. New York NY. In Canada, the subsidiary American-Abell Co.

Figure 3. The exterior of an Advance Thresher store, by its signage emphasizing that, in addition to steam engines, it sold separators and corn huskers - which were first included in their annual catalog in 1901.

philanthropic resident of Alma, purchased a controlling interest. Wright served as company president until it was purchased by M[einrad] Rumely Company of LaPorte, Indiana, in 1911. Although the Advance name lived on in a bankruptcy reorganization of 1915 (the Advance-Rumely Company) the Advance thrasher itself had died.

In their thirty years of production, the company made over 15,000 steam engines and 22,000 separators. In 1901 they began offering corn husker-shredders, making 50 the first year. David Kemmler has had a life-long interest in the company and began a log of serial numbers for all the steam engines. Over the last decades, he has been tracking down how many survive, recording who owns them and where. For instance, engine number 11867, a 22 horse power model sold in 1910, is now owned by Mark Halley of Pullman, Michigan.



Figure 4. A variety of trade catalogs: clockwise from the die-cut hand, Money Making Machinery 1903; 1898 when steam engines were offered as well as horse powers; before the reorganization as Advance Rumely Co.; 1886 Advance Thresher, made by The Case & Willard Thresher Co. (Lovett J. Willard, Constantius G. Case, C.E. Thomas); 1901 wallet-style catalog for Advance Threshing Machinery; a similar style with an embossed cover.



Figure 5. Six trade catalogs from the 1890s, each with a fine chromolithographed cover - two designs were made for the World's Fair Columbian Exposition in Chicago (middle top 1893; bottom left 1892).



Figure 6. Gies & Co. of Buffalo lithographed letterhead, flyers, and an agent's card.



has acquired quite a fan base for his own meticulous paintings of thresher models and the Banner Boy logo. Over decades, he has collected every piece of Advance ephemera he could find, keeping it all in fireproof boxes, but raiding the contents to help others restore their vintage steam engines. Thanks to the original Upton blueprints, and reproductions of Advance designs, he is able to replicate parts; his machine shop may resemble the 1881 beginnings of the Case & Willard company!

David's collection of Advance Thresher material is probably the country's most

Figure 7. Stationery both chromolithographed (Gies & Co.) and plain, Calvert Litho., for the Madison Wis. office (at 601 Williamson Street in an area known as "Machinery Row").



Figure 8. A sampling of price lists from 1886, 1888, 1900, along with directions for operating, a notebook, a match striker, postcards - a separate trade catalog for the Husker-Spreader has added the slogan, appropriate to the Banner Boy logo: "We Never Stop Climbing."

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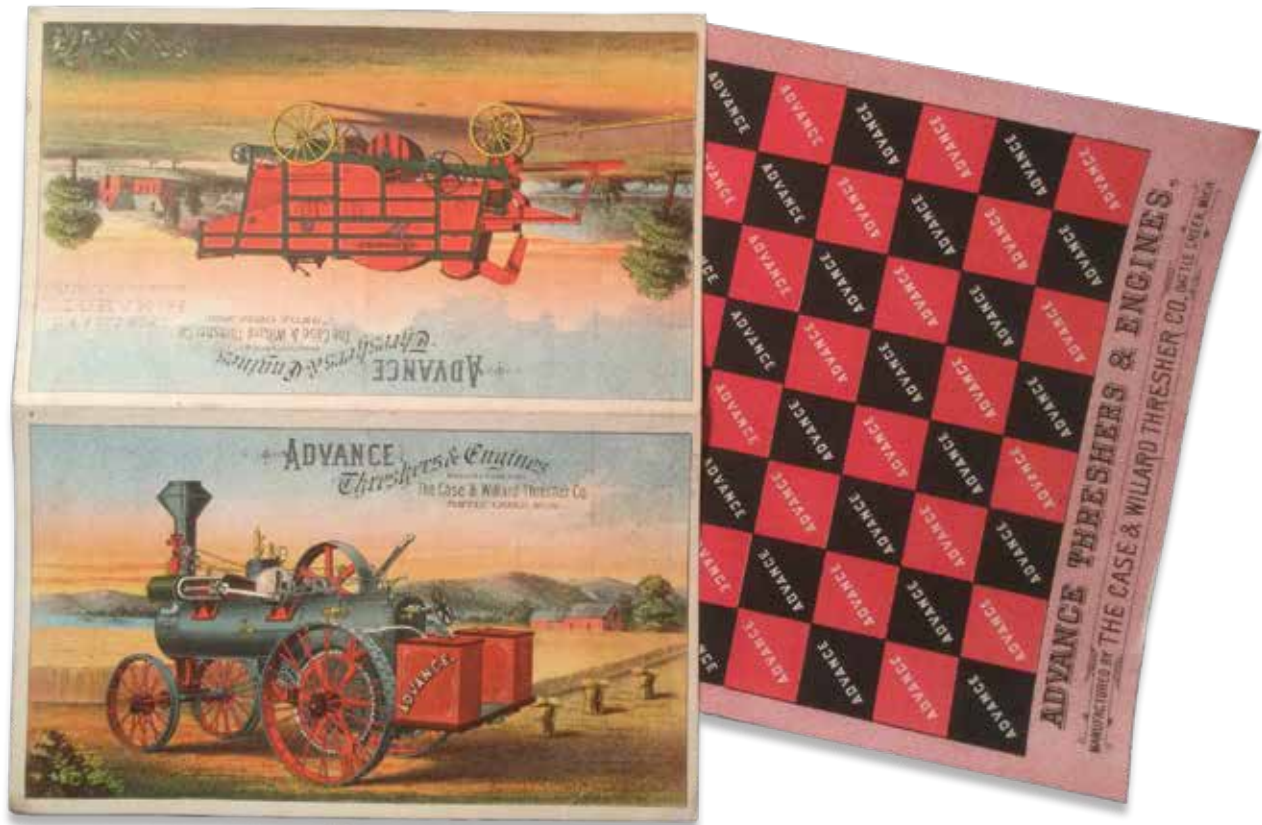
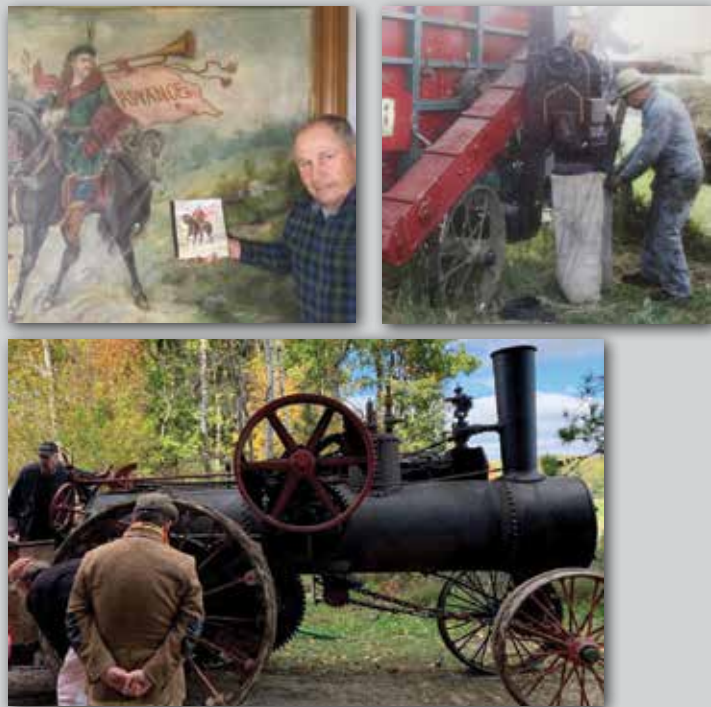


Figure 9. Front and back of a promotional checker board issued in 1885 by Case & Willard Thresher Co.; the next year the name was changed to Advance Thresher Co.

complete. The company's own files were destroyed in 1931 when Allis-Chalmers bought the Advance-Rumely Company. The collection will remain a family

affair. The next two generations, David's son and grandson, have inherited his passion. As David says, threshers have become a way of life.

**David Kemler**, a retired art teacher and railroad engineer, now makes steam engine restoration and exhibition his (very full) life. David posing in front of the Advance 'banner boy on horseback' painting in his and his wife's bedroom with a 1895 Advance Steam Engine catalog showing the same image. This painting originally hung in the Wright Hotel in Alma, Michigan, home to Ammi Willard Wright who was president of the Advance Threshing Company from 1885-1911. And (right) David collecting grain from a 1905 Advance Hand Feed Threshing machine that he fully restored. Below, David at the controls of an Advance Steam Engine he restored to give to a grandson - he fired it up with apple wood specially for our visiting ephemerists in October 2019 (Robert Dalton Harris and Bruce Shyer inspecting).





# The Robert Staples Metamorphic Collection

BY ERIKA PIOLA

INTRODUCTION BY BARBARA FAHS CHARLES

On November 16, 2020, Bob Staples' collection of over 1,300 metamorphic trade cards was delivered to its new home at the Library Company of Philadelphia to be part of their Visual Culture collections. Bob assembled these cards one-by-one over nearly fifty years.

Bob was introduced to trade cards in 1970. We both were working at the Office of Charles & Ray Eames and were in the middle of creating "A Computer Perspective," an exhibition for IBM. The exhibition and related book published by Harvard University Press covered the period from 1890, when Herman Hollerith's Tabulating Machine was in full service for the U.S. Census, to 1950, when John Von Neuman's concept of the stored program was realized and the first generation of computers were in operation. The exhibit featured a huge history wall of small machines, parts of big ones, images of inventors and operations, and myriad documents with complicated formulas. While these artifacts varied somewhat over the sixty-year period and we included large dates marking the decades, Bob felt we needed landmarks that would give our viewers clues about when these inventions and concepts took place. Could we find some "ephemera" from elections, world fairs, Olympics or other major events that would visually establish the time period? Friends at the Smithsonian told us about a dealer in political ephemera, who, in turn, gave us names of several others who sold paper, all in Pennsylvania. The exhibition was richer for these finds. Within a couple of years, we were regularly buying posters, trade cards and other ephemera, keeping a lot and selling some at a show or two a year.

Bob's detailed accounting shows his first five metamorphic cards were all purchased in October 1973—two from Gwen Goldman at Renninger's in Adamstown, Pennsylvania and three from Popular Antiques in Gloucester, Massachusetts—revealing our pattern of frequent antiquing trips to Pennsylvania and stops at promising-looking antique shops on the way. From then on, "met" for "metamorphic" with a brief description dots Bob's records. When the Ephemera Society held its first fair in 1980, Bob attended alone and returned home totally enthralled. Subsequently, if we were in the country, we faithfully made the yearly trip north from Washington DC to participate as dealers or buyers, and often both. The annual Ephemera Society gathering became not only a rich vein of delights to tap into, but a treasured time to share discoveries and chuckle at these amusing little cards with all of our friends in the ephemera world.



Figure 1. *The Aesthetic Joker* [Oscar Wilde]: pull down and tongue sticks out. Published by S.L. Fabry & Co., N. Y., 1882.

When asked why he collected metamorphic trade cards—not just one, but two or more, when possible, to show the transformations—Bob's response is simple: "they're fun." The charm is like a well-told joke with an

*continued on page 10*

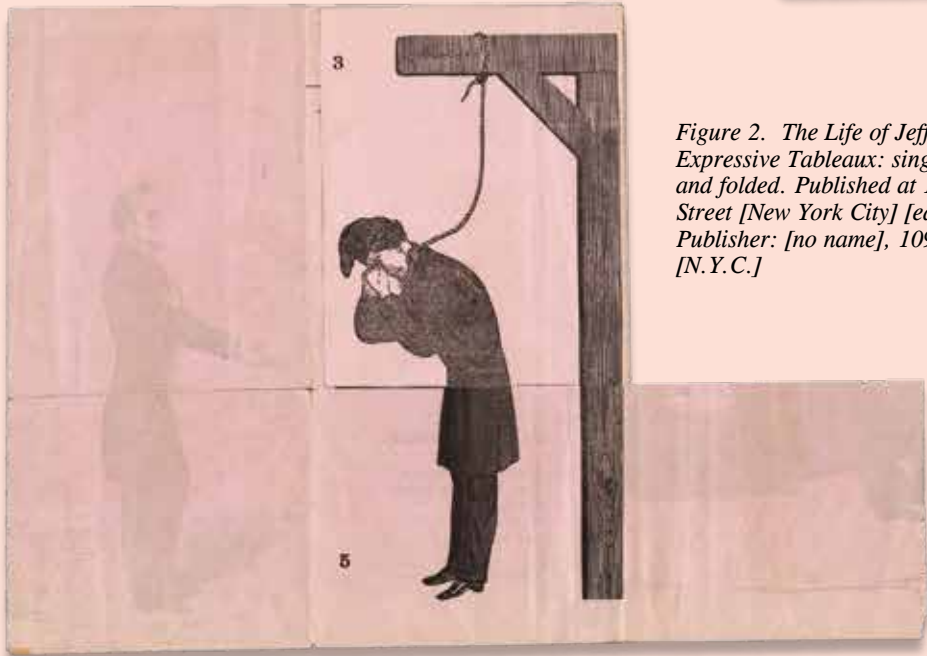
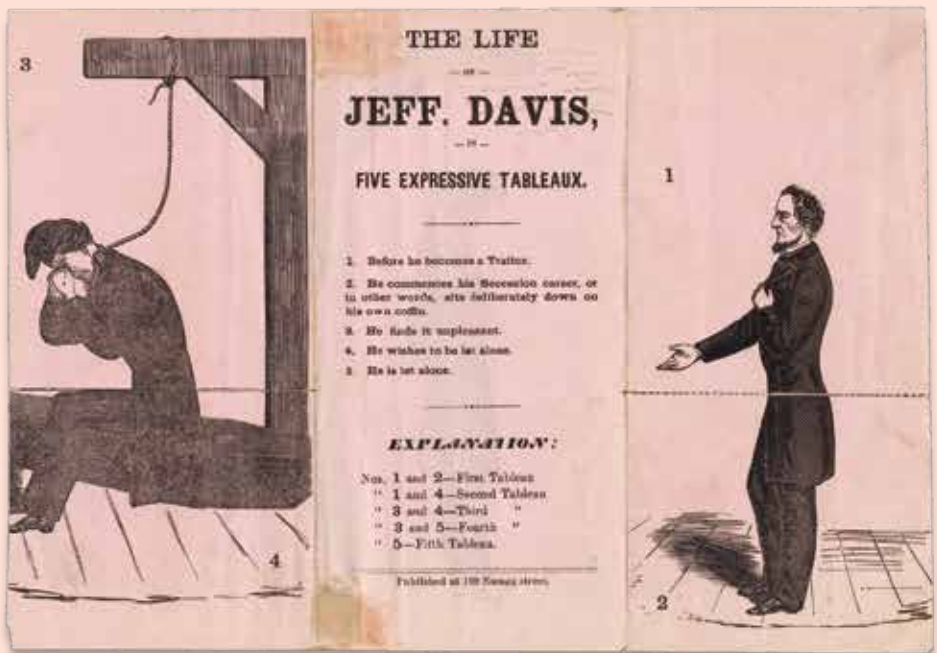


Figure 2. *The Life of Jeff. Davis in Five Expressive Tableaux: single sheet, cut and folded. Published at 109 Nassau Street [New York City] [early 1860s] Publisher: [no name], 109 Nassau Street [N.Y.C.]*



Figure 3. Paysandu Ox Tongues, McCall & Co. Limited, London: fold down. [late 19th century]

intriguing set-up and unexpected out-come: Oscar Wilde sticking out his tongue to say “Don’t be silly” [Figure 1]; Jeff Davis setting up his own execution [Figure 2]; the horns of a bull becoming the horn handles of a carving set [Figure 3]; a plain-covered folder that opens to a girl with a high kick [Figure 4]; a human skeleton luring a skeletal bull into a bone crushing machine [Figure 5]. Some may not be politically correct today, but they speak with visual eloquence of the attitudes and humor of their times. It is hard to resist their charms. The Library Company’s Visual Culture program, which inspires myriad scholars, is a perfect fit for this extensive collection.

—Barbara Fahs Charles

### Welcoming the Robert Staples Metamorphic Collection

About two years ago, Bob Staples and Barbara Charles paid a visit to our Graphic Arts Department. The meeting preceded a Visual Culture Program Roundtable, “To Catch the Eye,” which showcased the historical value, in this digital age, of the study of moving images encountered over a century before cinema, video, and the internet. The theme of the event caught their eyes, as did the thought that the Library Company might be the next proper home for the Robert Staples Metamorphic Collection.

I must admit that metamorphic prints have had a spot in my curatorial heart for a while now. These visual works that morph through the physical engagement with the item, often through a device such as a flap

[Figure 6], wheel [Figure 7], slot, slide [Figure 8], or pop-up, are materials that have a long and intertwined history with visual and material culture, education, and propaganda.

A history that begins in ancient visual culture with moveable parts in manuscripts books evolved, by the 15<sup>th</sup> century, into moveable parts in printed books. Devices such as vovelles - or wheel charts - animated texts on astronomy to facilitate calculations to further our knowledge of the universe.

Soon after, metamorphics became tools for putting forth a political agenda. By the 16<sup>th</sup> century, German anticlerical prints showing churchmen that unfolded into Devils became a thread in this web of a genre. Later, in 18<sup>th</sup>- and early 19<sup>th</sup>-century France, mechanical cards critical of Napoleon or French royalty were part of the cultural history. In the same period, flap books were produced with didactic, religious or allegorical messages, such as American Quaker educator Benjamin Sands’ *Metamorphosis, or A Transformation of Pictures... which* depicted the beginning, progress, and end of man.

In the century that followed, metamorphics were predominantly employed as advertising novelties, although the genre was still used to produce political propaganda pieces. Nearly all of these metamorphic genres can be found in the Staples Collection, which is particularly strong in 19<sup>th</sup> century and American examples.

The collection includes a rich variety: flap books, puzzles, games, toys, advertisements, and propaganda



Figure 4. Dolly Madison 5¢ Cigar, I.N. Carvalho & Company, Philadelphia PA: leg kicks up when opened. [late 19th century]

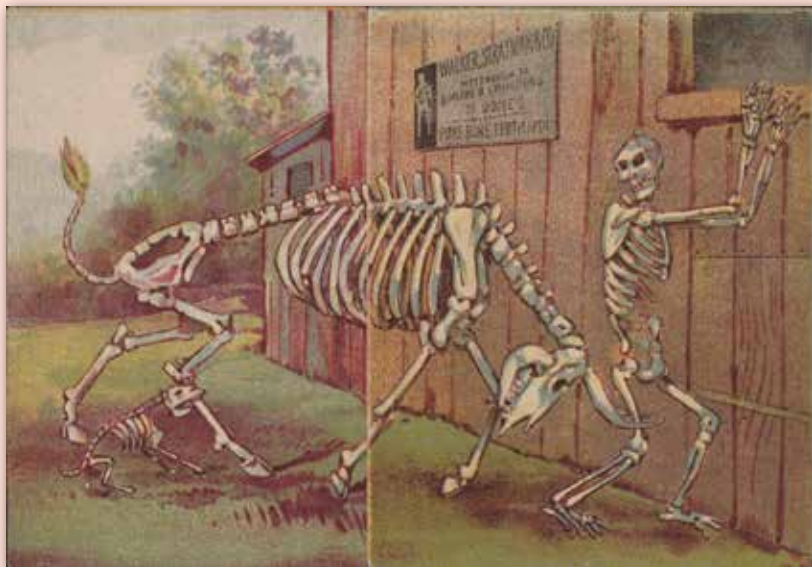


Figure 5. Boilers & Grinders of Bones, Walker, Stratman & Co., Allegheny PA: fold right. [late 19th century]



When tired  
**Coca-Cola**  
Will refresh you;  
Head-achey, help you;  
Nervous, relieve you;  
Thirsty, fill you.  
**WATER**  
When boiled and filtered will do to bathe in or even drink if it costs nothing. But if you have to buy it get a drink which has something to it more than mere dampness get **Coca-Cola**  
It is always  
Nourishing, Refreshing, Invigorating.  
More than 250 Million Bottles (glasses) used last year  
FOR SALE EVERYWHERE.  
TO DEALERS AT 70¢ A CASE. TO FAMILIES AT \$1.00 A CASE.  
(CONTENTS: TWO DOZEN BOTTLES)  
PHONE OR WRITE NEAREST  
**COCA-COLA BOTTLING CO.**  
"ISSUED BY"  
(WESTERN COCA COLA BOTTLING CO.)  
CHICAGO.

REGISTRATION APPLIED FOR.

Figure 6. Drink Coca Cola, Western Coca Cola Bottling Co., Chicago: fold down/girl in bath tub [ca.1905]



Figure 7. Deering all Steel Binder, Wm. Deering & Co., Chicago: rotation / leg kicks. Printed by Sackett, Wilhelm & Betzig, N.Y. [late 19th century]



Figure 8. *There's More in a Hog*, The Cudahy Packing Co., Omaha NE: pull apart. Printed by Gugler Lithographic Co., Milwaukee WI [ca.1910]



Figure 9. *Plenty Dirtee Shirtee / Take Your Cue and Get Out* [waterproof linen collars]: fold down. [ca.1880]



pieces. It is an ideal resource for the study of graphic design, paper mechanics and political rhetoric, as well as the marketing practices, social mores, and popular movements which produced them.

These pieces also document the ugly history of racism as reflected in our visual culture [Figure 9]. Offensive portrayals of racial, gender, and class inequalities and stereotypes of the perceived “other” are clearly displayed in these images, and must be understood in the context of their history.

This collection epitomizes the mission of the Visual Culture Program: the promotion of visual literacy, the history of our social construction of the visual, and the mass visual culture of the nation before 1950. As art historian and scholar of moving images in American art, Juliet Sperling has noted, “This is unlike most (or any) of the other collections of moving images. It is most suited and will thrive at the Library Company — a public collection with a clearly delimited focus on American visual culture.”

### Barbara Fahs Charles,

a member of the ESA Board of Directors, is a museum interpretive designer by vocation and historian of carousels by avocation. Whenever her partner, Robert Staples, would share his newest metamorphic acquisitions, she always delighted in their creativity, even when they were painfully politically incorrect by today’s standards.



### Erika Piola

is Curator of Graphic Arts and Director Visual Culture Program, Library Company of Philadelphia. She has authored works about the Library Company’s African Americana graphics collection, 19th-century photographic views of Center City, and ephemera, as well as prominent early Philadelphia photographers. Her research interests also include Philadelphia frame maker /picture dealers, sensational news event lithographs, and stereographs portraying the “New Woman.”



# My Ephemerist Memoir

BY HANNAH ROSE SWAN

“Somehow,” I thought to myself, staring at a poster advertising an 1869 nitrous oxide party, “I don’t think this is how most people spend their time at work...”

As I began to consider how I would approach writing about my work with ephemera, I was struck by the privilege of my position as a special collections librarian. An average day on the job brings me in contact with early-twentieth-century drag queen posters, advertisements for cocaine-infused wine, and nineteenth-century socialist pamphlets. How many other fields offer such excitement and novelty?! As fellow ephemerists, I’m sure you are all familiar with ephemera’s delightfully endless variations; as such, I will try to constrain myself to addressing what I see as the most pressing questions about its importance, preservation, and future and avoid unnecessary (albeit highly amusing) detours into “Really Cool Ephemera.”

Ephemera are, perhaps, the original planned obsolescence—the hyper-turnover of contemporary capitalism presaged in print. As we know, they are often at higher risk of degradation precisely because they were intended to be discarded. The paper used is often thinner and more brittle, making it prone to chipping or other damage. The inherent disposability of the materials also means they were often not cared for in the way that an expensive book might have been. Without a sense of institutional urgency, many currently unprocessed, un-conserved collections of ephemera could be lost forever. It’s heartbreaking to come across a broadside that was folded or crumpled in storage and is no longer readable. Each damaged work is a piece of history lost!

In the following lines, I aim to use my own experiences as an ephemerist synecdochally, exploring the role of the individual collector within institutional collections, while connecting my professional work and the collections at the Phillips Library of the Peabody Essex Museum to broader themes of social justice. By making these connections, I hope to underscore the importance of non-traditional donors and non-traditional materials like ephemera to institutional collecting. Their cultivation intersects with and supports broader

conversations we as a society are having about equity and inclusivity.

Attempting a “genealogy” of my journey to ephemera, I can trace all the ways in which I’ve unwittingly been an ephemerist since I was very young. I started out collecting stickers, ticket stubs and even interesting packaging. In fourth grade, when asked to bring in my “collection,” I was the only child with a stack of books rather than the innumerable Beanie Babies and baseball cards. I would often save notes my friends passed me in class, envisioning a future in which the flotsam and jetsam of my life would take on a significance that eclipsed that of my youthful existence. Dutifully, I tucked what I can see now as my burgeoning ephemera collection into a box printed with wild horses that had been given to me by an aunt.

I eventually took up more concerted ephemera collecting, though I wouldn’t have labeled it as such. I



Figure 1. A sampling of the author’s ephemera collection.

continued on page 16



Figure 2. A small broadside announcing the 1878 picnic of the three African Methodist Episcopal Churches in Chelsea, Lynn and Salem, mounted on a large scrapbook page. [This and all subsequent images are reproduced courtesy of the Phillips Library, Peabody Essex Museum.]

was primarily drawn to mid-twentieth century materials, both for their campy, eye-watering photography and their affordability. When I left for college, I met my friend Dani, who is from Las Vegas—a short drive from where we went to school. We shared a love of B-movies and garish cookery and whenever we would stay with her parents in Vegas, we would browse through the vintage cookbooks at thrift stores and read each other passages for particularly vile concoctions (hot mayonnaise puffs, anyone?).

Though my love of ephemera was, perhaps, inherent to my character, it didn't have a name until I began my master's degree in Book History and Material Culture at the University of Edinburgh. Following a series of glad happenstances (including a stint in Almaty, Kazakhstan and a fortuitous viewing of the show *Outlander*), I began my career as an ephemerist in earnest upon my matriculation at Edinburgh in 2017. As I learned more about the history of collectors and collecting, my view of my own collections began to shift, constellating

around a central theme of ephemerality. Intrigued, I submitted my collection for the David Laing Student Book Collecting Prize and won. If you love collecting and someone pays you £500 to do it, your fate is sealed. My personal collection of printed ephemera now includes over 250 items, mostly related to party planning, gelatin, and liquor, alongside a veritable tidal wave of a book collection that threatens at every turn to drown me in my own home ... [Figure 1]

I share this small "memoir in ephemera" not just to stroke my own ego, but to underline the universality of the personal ephemera collecting experience. Unlike art or book collecting, the collecting of small bits of personal ephemera doesn't require a trust fund, or even a particularly concerted effort. Attending a great gig and saving the ticket or keeping a postcard received from a dear friend are almost universal experiences and represent precisely the kind of collecting that seduces the type of people not usually represented in the bibliophilic crowd.

Though it may seem unlikely given my profession, I was raised largely unaware that rare book or ephemera librarianship was a potential means of earning a living.

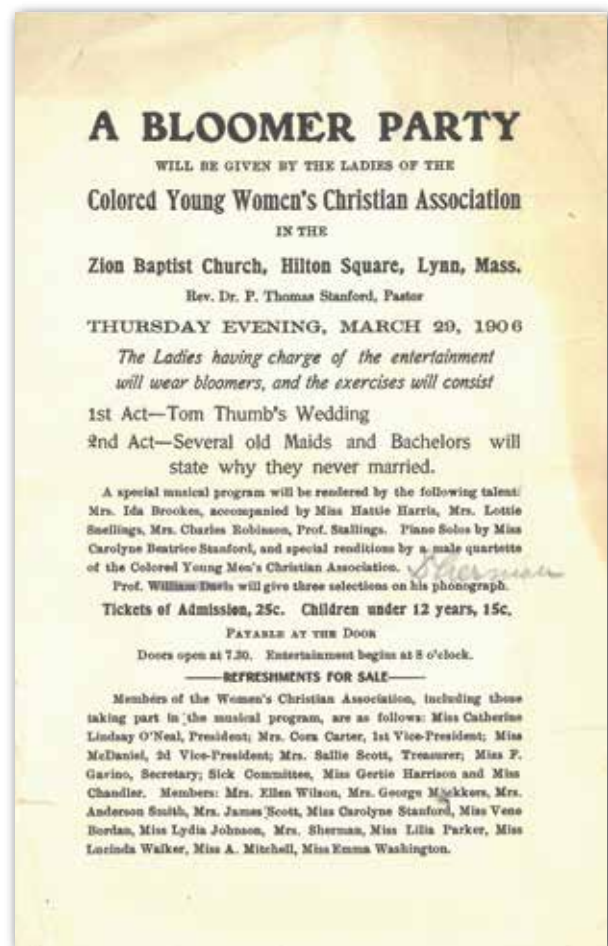


Figure 3. A small printed announcement of a Bloomer Party sponsored in Lynn by the Colored Young Women's Christian Association. A manuscript correction points out that, along with musical presentations, a Professor Sherman rather than William Davis would play selections on his phonograph.



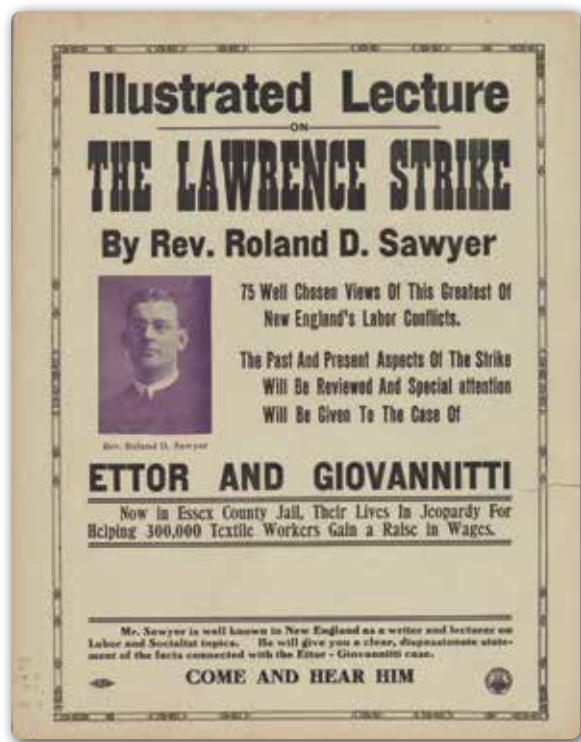


Figure 4. 1912 broadside announcing an illustrated lecture on the textile workers strike in Lawrence by the Rev. Roland D. Sawyer, focusing on the Ettore Giovannitti case. (The two men and a third defendant on trial for the murder of a woman striker were acquitted.)

I certainly never would have considered parting with my collection by donating it to an institution, an attitude I assume is shared by many other young people (and marginalized communities) today.

The issue, then, rests not with the individual collectors but with the institutions that fail to lay the groundwork and engage community members who collect these materials. As any special collections librarian knows, there is never enough money. Propose processing ephemera into the system and you're likely to hear a chorus of "not what the donors want," and "prioritizing researcher interests." (Interesting, though, how researchers are often unaware that ephemera collections even exist or, indeed, that they could hold value for their research) While I have been lucky enough to be supported in my work at the Phillips Library, there remain

many archivists stymied by institutional inertia or lack of funding.

The Phillips Library's ephemera collections, though not as well-known as those at other New England institutions, are extensive and diverse. The most thoroughly processed and most often used is our collection of over 3,000 broadsides, encompassing materials on every imaginable topic, including very large fish, the Wobblies, and snow shoveling, to name just a few. Sarah Bilotta, our Assistant Cataloging and Systems Librarian (see page 21) and Jenn Anderson, our library intern, are currently working on a project to enhance the catalog records of the collection, selections from which will also be digitized. I was recently able to identify a small cache of un-cataloged broadsides related to nineteenth- and early twentieth-century female impersonation that were then individually cataloged and added into the broadside collection. I undertook the work to digitize them and they will be made available in partnership with the Digital Transgender Archives.

Unsurprisingly, given the Phillips Library's strength in maritime collecting, we hold one of the best collections of sailing ship cards in the world, as well as a variety of other ephemera related to maritime shipping and leisure. The Library also holds a large collection of advertising and trade ephemera, focusing on New England and the American northeast, with specific strengths in eastern Massachusetts and Essex County materials. Topics represented include everything from toys and games to electrical appliances to travel, and range in date from

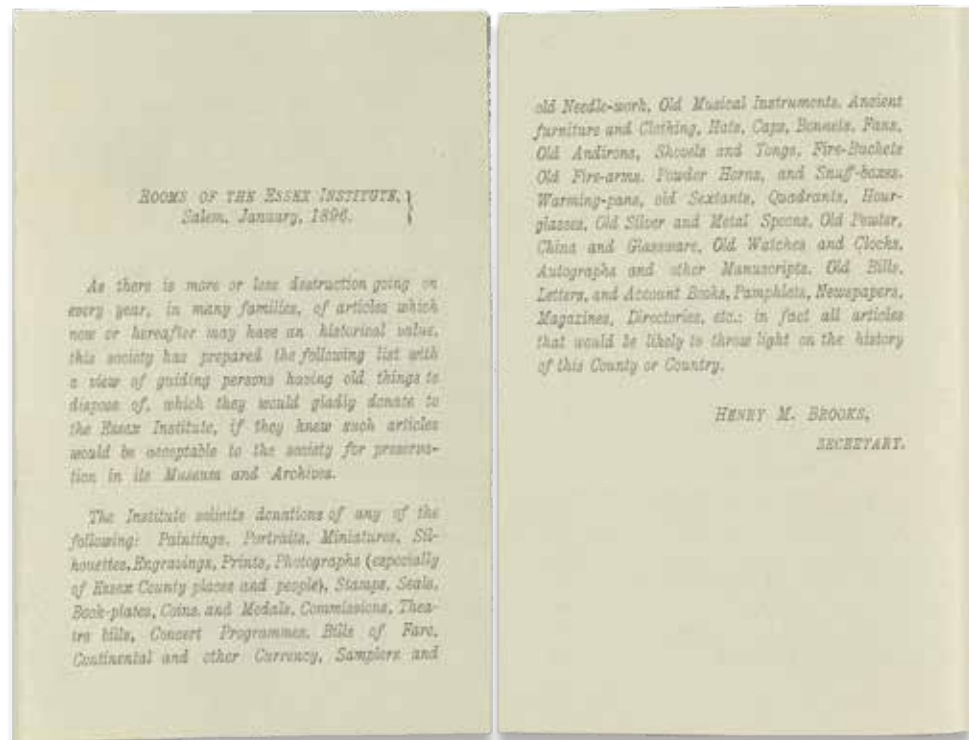


Figure 5. An 1896 form letter from the Essex Institute asking specifically for donations of ephemera (theatre bills, concert programs, bills of fare, etc.)



Figure 6. A 1927 invitation to a ball held by the Lynn Press Club - no doubt donated by a young attendee.

the 18th century to the mid-1990s. There are particular strengths in printing and bookselling, shoes and clothing, and food and drink. We also hold a robust selection of product samples, including napkins, book papers, textiles, and wallpapers, both within the trade literature collection and in our print collections.

Most notable, however, is our collection of social, cultural, and political ephemera from Essex County, which I believe to be one of the most comprehensive local ephemera collections in the country. It is unusual in that it was, in essence, “crowd-sourced”; the donations that were solicited are much more racially, ethnically, linguistically, and economically diverse than the manuscript holdings at large. The collection includes materials in French, Spanish, Italian, Polish, Russian, and Hebrew, among others, and contains the largest concentration of materials on labor parties and workers’ rights in the Phillips Library collections. It also represents a wealth of examples from jobbing and larger local presses.

In our quest to re-highlight **stories of marginalized communities**, the marginalized print materials are often some of the richest sources. Among the most significant finds of my journeys through our ephemera collections was the broadside you see reproduced in Figure 2.

The “Black Picnic,” as it is now known, is a tradition spanning almost 300 years in Massachusetts, but one which was not known to be represented anywhere in our collections. Last month, while indulging in my favorite pastime of opening drawers of miscellaneous,

unprocessed materials (much to the chagrin of other members of staff), I happened upon a stack of oversized scrapbook pages. Unable to resist, I began flipping through them, only to chance upon what is now the only known extant material in the Phillips Library’s collections related to the Black Picnic. In the context of the ongoing cultural conversation regarding the Black community’s media representation and representations of Black trauma specifically, I believe there is a special responsibility on the part of archivists and librarians to highlight stories that celebrate representations of Black joy and community. I am, therefore happy to announce that the broadside will be conserved and receive individual cataloging, after which it will be fully accessible to researchers for the first time in just under 150 years.

My experience of discovery, though distinctive in its historical importance, is hardly unique. It feels as though every time I open a box in our ephemera collection, some new aspect of Essex County’s history comes to light. Today, it was a broadside advertising a “Bloomer Party” put on by the ladies of the Colored Young Women’s Christian Association of Lynn, Massachusetts [Figure 3]. It’s unclear what part the bloomers, already anachronistic in 1906, played in the party, but we can nonetheless appreciate this tantalizing remnant of youth culture. Indeed, a search in WorldCat reveals this artifact is likely the *only extant trace* that the Colored Young Women’s Christian Association in Lynn existed.

The “Bloomer Party” broadside was stacked on top of another, slightly larger, announcing the “Mass



Figure 7. Announcement flyer for a new daily newspaper, the Salem Evening Mail, to debut in the fall of 1915.

Monster Rally” in support of Joseph James Ettor and Arturo Giovannitti, famously arrested in Lawrence, Massachusetts during the Bread and Roses Strike of 1912. Labor organizers with the IWW, Ettor and Giovannitti found themselves accused of inciting the riot that led to the death of a young woman, Anna LoPizzo, despite the fact that both were over three miles away from the scene when LoPizzo’s death occurred. The case became a *cause célèbre* for labor activists all over the country, many of whom traveled to Essex County for the trial, which took place in Salem. In searching further, I found a small but significant collection of broadsides, tracts, and newspaper clippings related to the trial, from both pro-strike and anti-strike groups. I was most struck by a pamphlet by Reverend Roland D. Sawyer, who wrote a beautiful appeal to the jurors not to let themselves be prejudiced against the men based on their race (Italian) or, interestingly, based on the jurors’ own capitalist sympathies. In an exciting twist, I was able to connect Sawyer’s 1912 pamphlet to a 1910 card advertising an “Illustrated Lecture on Socialism” he had given two years prior, which I had previously found in the collections [Figure 4].

Why, then, can we find such a **diversity of materials** and subjects in the ephemera collections, as compared to the Phillips Library’s broader rare book and family manuscript holdings? The answer is partially that the collection seems to have historically been a dumping ground for librarians and curators looking to place problem materials. It is also the way that the collection was put together. As I began to process the Essex County materials, I noticed that many of them had individual donor names on the verso and that there was little overlap in the names. Intrigued, I did research in our accession books and in a collection of ephemera from the Essex Institute, one of our heritage institutions.

Though I can’t speak to its uniqueness as far as histories of institutional ephemera collecting go (a topic I am beginning to explore more thoroughly in my

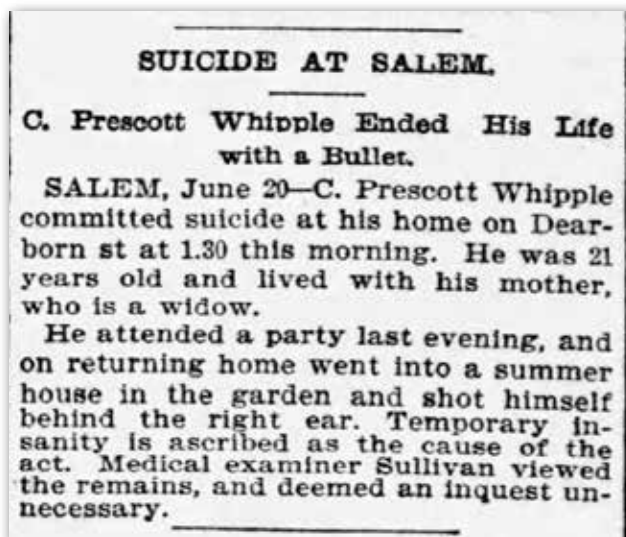


Figure 8. News of the suicide of C. Prescott Whipple from page 4, The Boston Globe, June 20, 1894.

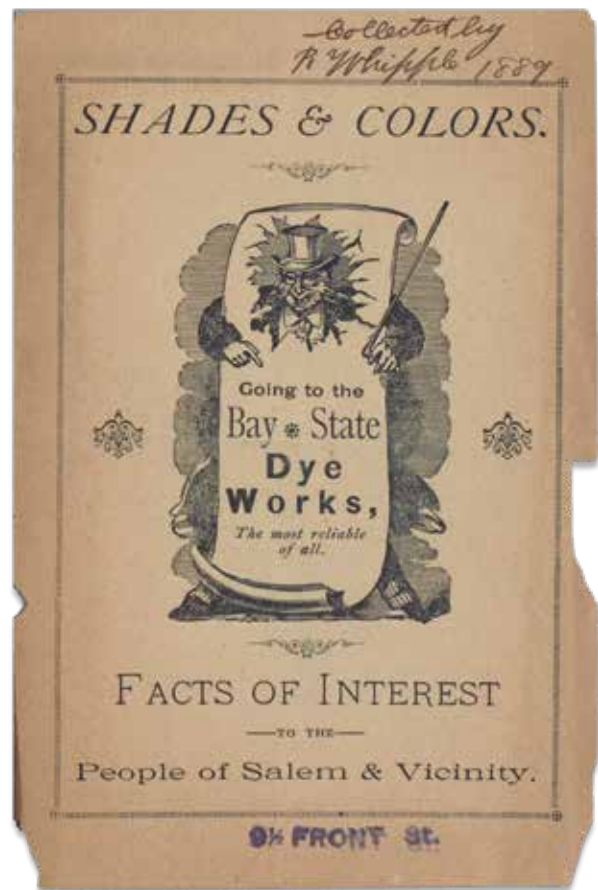


Figure 9. A fragile flyer “collected by P. Whipple 1889.”

own scholarship), I can say that Figure 5 represents an excitingly up-to-date view of the place of the “average” person in institutional collecting, and a surprisingly generous perspective on which materials were of historical value.

Looking broadly at the history of collecting and collectors, the materials that were deemed worthy of collecting were usually those in line with the interests of people who had the means to purchase and preserve them, typically white, middle- or upper-class men. In the present day, it’s much harder for the contemporary scholar to find primary sources from women, working class individuals or non-white communities. As with the Black Picnic ephemeron, even major or ongoing events in marginalized communities may have been overlooked by contemporary curators.

By contrast, the democratization of collecting “such articles [that] would be acceptable to the society for preservation in its Museum and Archives” puts the onus of curation on the layperson, rather than on the “professionals” of the Essex Institute. Obviously, I can’t get too carried away in this utopian scenario, as I’m sure the curators at E.I. had the final say as to what entered the collections, but the sheer presence of this circular indicates a more communal viewpoint toward collecting than many institutions today share.

*continued on page 20*



Figure 10. A humorous double-sided trade card, printed by Donaldson Brothers NY for Wells Richardson & Co. makers of baby food in Burlington VT, and overprinted for druggist J.T. Tudbury of Salem.

Another **collecting strategy** was to send young men to collect issues of circulars, tracts, theatre programs, and the like. [Figures 6 and 7] In this, also, we see meaningful traces of youth culture and histories of labor, as well as particular history of ephemera collecting. The focus of much of my research over the past year has centered on one of these young men, C. Prescott Whipple, who collected a large portion of advertising, social, and cultural ephemera from Salem when he was just seventeen. (It's possible I have slid into an obsession since I had a distressing dream last week wherein I flipped through the pages of a cartes-de-visite album, gripped by an unknowable certainty that Prescott's image was contained therein. I woke up before I could see his photo, hence the distress.)

Prescott, member of a lesser-known branch of a well-known North Shore family, seems to have gotten involved with the Essex Institute through his uncle, George M. Whipple, a regionally famous local veteran and secretary of the Institute. None of Prescott's personal papers survive, so I have traced his life through the ephemera he collected for the Institute, including a membership ticket to the Salem Oratorio Society, upon which is written "Mr. Prescott Whipple (Usher)" and myriad ephemera he marked with his bespoke name stamp, an oddly endearing detail.

All of this taken together may not seem of particular importance, but his only lasting newspaper record belies these appearances. [Figure 8] Histories of mental

health are so often hemmed into institutional histories or obscured by the fears and stigmas of their contemporary cultures that the individuals' lives and voices are lost in their archiving. Even though he may not have created the materials himself, nor possessed the means to collect items of great monetary value, Prescott still felt enough ownership to take the time to inscribe "Collected by P. Whipple, 1889" onto the ephemera he collected, allowing those of us in the present to connect these microhistories of society or business back to him. [Figure 9] His case underlines the accessibility of ephemera collecting and its importance to the excavation of "lost" histories.

I'm sad to announce that I will be leaving the Phillips Library after two and a half years this June, although I'm excited to begin my next chapter in London, where I will undertake a second master's degree in **Archives and Records Management at University College London**. As I move forward in my career, both academic and professional, I hope to continue to advocate for the preservation and promotion of ephemera as a means of amplifying the voices of marginalized communities of the past and present.

I would like to leave you all with four "action items" that I see as crucial to the continued stewardship of institutional ephemera collections. They are: the creation of more grants to support the processing of ephemera, the inclusion of ephemera by university librarians when teaching library literacy, the cultivation of non-traditional and small-scale donors by institutions (think: teens, immigrants and refugees, blue collar workers), and the use of social media and other emerging technologies to promote the quirky, funny, poignant world of printed ephemera. [Figure 10]

## Hannah Swan,

currently works as a Reference Assistant at the Phillips Library of the Peabody Essex Museum in Massachusetts. She received her BA in French Studies in 2015 from Scripps College (National Merit Scholar, James E. Scripps Scholar, Commended European Union Scholar with honors, Padelford Award for Excellence in French Studies). She received a Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship to Gharm, Tajikistan upon her graduation, moving from Tajikistan to Almaty, Kazakhstan when her grant year ended. In 2018, received an MSc in Book History and Material Culture at the University of Edinburgh (David Laing Student Book Collecting Prize). In the fall, she will begin a second master's degree in Archives and Records Management at University College London. When not collecting/admiring/researching/rhapsodizing about ephemera, Hannah enjoys printmaking, roller skating, and hiking with her chihuahua, Hennessy.



# Advertising Bicycles to the New England “Femme Nouvelle”

BY SARAH BILOTTA



Figure 1. Cover illustration by William H. Bradley for the 1895 trade catalog of the Pope Manufacturing Company's Columbia Bicycles, Hartford CT. A blind embossed stamp indicates this had been the property of the Cycle and Supply store of Whitten & Pollard in Lynn MA (8-12 Andrew St.), also in Salem MA (the company transitioned to automobiles in the 20th century). Phillips Library, Peabody Essex Museum, TL435 .P66 1895.

La Femme Nouvelle and Art Nouveau coincided in the western world at the turn of the last century. The socially liberated woman both embodied and empowered a new era; the art had ornamental beginnings in the domesticity of the English Arts and Crafts Movement but later stretched its tendrils into the public realm of advertising art. Progressive upper-class women, lured from their homes by the emerging consumer culture, became the predominant subjects as well as prime consumers of this commercial propaganda.<sup>1</sup>

The mythical maidens shown in Art Nouveau advertising emerged from the lithographs of European poster artists like Alphonse Mucha and Eugene Grasset, who used beautiful women to sell everything from art expositions to writing ink.<sup>2</sup> These women were often portrayed as visions from the natural world, with flowing gowns and hair like vines. Their fantasy beauty offered a serene yet tantalizing reprieve from the smog and machinery of 19th century industrialization. However, these hyper-feminine goddesses appeared

in stark contrast to the growing presence of women's rights proponents, some of whom were from the upper-middle class households that consumer advertising targeted.<sup>3</sup> Other Art Nouveau print artists such as Aubrey Beardsley and Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec also portrayed Art Nouveau women, but in a different light: wild, provocative, and spiritually uninhibited.<sup>4</sup>

Elements of both of these styles of Art Nouveau appear in striking variety in female-targeted bicycle advertising of the turn of the century. As progressive women sought access to new technologies and products, this industry adopted the Art Nouveau style specifically to engage these new consumers. Creators of advertisements in the bicycle industry had at their disposal a product which represented the ultimate symbol of female freedom of movement, and, in order to sell more bicycles, they embraced it.



Figure 2. Embossed cover for the 1893 trade catalog of the Overman Wheel Company's Victor Bicycles, Chicopee Falls MA, printed by the Springfield Printing & Binding Co. Trade Catalog Collection, Box 16, Phillips Library, Peabody Essex Museum, Rowley, MA.

continued on page 22



Figure 3. Engraving by Graves & Green of a “Ladies Bloomer Brownie” bicycle in the 1895 trade catalog of Razor & Handy, Boston MA. Trade Catalog Collection, Box 16, Phillips Library, Peabody Essex Museum, Rowley, MA.

While working on an ephemera cataloging project at the Peabody Essex Museum, I came across a trove of examples of the New England bicycle industry’s adoption of Art Nouveau. In Figure 1, William J. Bradley’s design for Columbia Bicycles shares elements of Beardsley’s style. Black outlines form the shape of a voluminous fur coat, cascading into a feather plume upon the hat of the rider. The wheels of the bicycle are reduced to spoke-less tires. The rider is mirrored by a stark alter-ego in profile. The minimalist line-work and simplistic yet emotive facial structures are reminiscent of Beardsley’s illustrations for *Salome*. Columbia Bicycles not only places a woman rider on the cover of their catalog, but imbues her with all the exuberance of an opera star.

Victor Bicycles, in 1893, also put a woman on the cover of their catalog, but not as a rider (Figure 2). All-white and embossed like a marble relief, this cover features a bust of a woman with long hair in the upper-left corner, opposite the name of the company. However, unlike a classical statue frozen in time, her hair flies into the air as though she has been swept by an uncontrollable gust of wind. Nowhere on this cover does a bicycle actually appear, but the feeling of riding a bicycle is implied. This cover is laden with Art Nouveau embellishment and fantasy, from the gravity-defying hair to the emblem of passing time (or approaching modernity?) in a nearly emptied hourglass. The ornate decoration surrounding the colophon is emblematic of the wood carving seen in many Art Nouveau structures, such as those of Victor Horta and Hector Guimard.

However, in imbuing bicycle advertisements with the Art Nouveau spirit, manufacturers and designers were forced to find a balance between fantasy and necessity. Concerns about bicycle safety are apparent in many of these catalogs, which boast increasing safety measures. Safety was a concern for women especially, as they often rode in unruly skirts.

One company, Razoux & Handy, offer a solution in the form of the “Bloomer Brownie,” [Figure 3] which “[according to] the editor of ‘The Wheelwoman,’... seems to solve the problem for lady riders who wish more rigidity than is found in the ordinary ladies’ model and yet are not prepared to mount a strictly diamond frame, or ride in masculine attire.” The company further boasts that the Bloomer Brownie is “specially designed for ladies who wish to ride with the short skirt and leggings.”<sup>5</sup>

Theoretically, the ideal “femme nouvelle,” would be more likely to embrace liberating new fashions, and many bicycle publications advertised accordingly.<sup>6</sup> While art magazines gained popularity among both Secessionist artists and consumers of Art Nouveau, bicycle company Humber & Co. Ltd. had their own publication called *The Humber Weekly*, filled with pages of poetry and illustrations about bicycles.<sup>7</sup> [Figure 4] One such illustration portrays a confident woman in an urban setting, with one hand on her hip and the other on her cross-bar bike. Opposite her is a poem called The

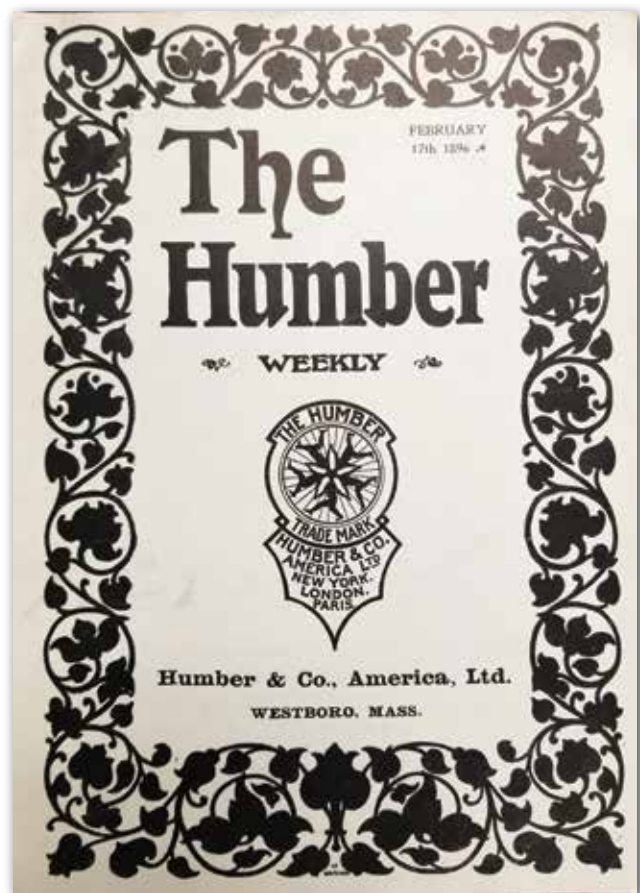


Figure 4. Front cover of *The Humber Weekly* for February 17, 1896, published by Humber & Co., Westboro MA. Humber was a British bicycle (Thomas Humber building cycles from 1868 to 1892 in Nottinghamshire). Humber USA beginning in 1894 used the logo of five figures running within a wheel. The Art Nouveau framing decoration was by Charles H. Hapgood. Trade Catalog Collection, Box 16, Phillips Library, Peabody Essex Museum, Rowley, MA.

Outdoor Girl, which praises the new women's bicycle attire. [Figures 5a & 5b]

With her locks of hair restrained beneath a hat and her corseted figure, the "outdoor girl" is hardly a Mucha maiden, yet she is liberated not only from societal expectations of women's roles but also from embodying a sexualized fantasy. She represents the "other side" of the femme nouvelle: the emblematic abandon of Mucha's goddesses in the body of an everyday woman.

Bicycle advertisements in the Peabody Essex Museum's collection are indicative of a variety of approaches to embracing the "femme nouvelle" in order to sell bicycles, and most did not adhere to just one. Columbia Bicycles, although their above 1895 catalog is enlivened by a provocative, Beardsley-like illustration, also spoke to the safety concerns of



Figures 5a & 5b. Illustration from page 6 of *The Humber Weekly* in Figure 4, and the *American Wheelman* poem from page 7. Trade Catalog Collection, Box 16, Phillips Library, Peabody Essex Museum, Rowley, MA.

### THE OUTDOOR GIRL.

WHAT if the merry maiden goes a-riding on  
on the wheel,  
And wears a graceful costume that is short  
above the heel?  
Can one gainsay it, that though changed in  
mode of dress,  
She's of the gender feminine and not a whit  
the less?  
And if she dons the bloomers or the knick-  
erbocker clothes,  
Is not the person just as sweet as any  
blooming rose?

What if the college maiden rows a shell or  
sculls with oars,  
Or takes a goal in football field or bowls  
upon the floor,  
Is she any less a woman if her skin is very  
brown,  
Than when she trailed her skirts in mud  
and wore a high-necked gown?  
And if she boxes out her foe or fences like  
a man,  
Lacks she any fascination, whate'er her  
scheme or plan?

So far as all experience of men with women  
goes,  
For every ten of marriages nine are chock  
full of woes;  
The very latest woman, with her muscle,  
brains or pluck,  
May bring new joys to wedded life and give  
us better luck.

Of one thing I am certain from the widest  
range of view,  
Old-fashioned types must stand aside and  
make way for the new.  
Thank heaven for the change that's come  
and fascinating fads;  
For me the merry outdoor girl who emulates  
the lads!

— *American Wheelman.*



Figure 7 (above). A page from the 1896 *Falcon Cycles* catalog. Trade Catalog Collection, Box 16, Phillips Library, Peabody Essex Museum, Rowley, MA.

Figure 6 (right). An illustration from an advertisement for ladies' safety bicycle - essentially a term for the modern bicycle to differentiate it from earlier bicycle designs such as the pennyfarthing. Trade Catalog Collection, Box 16, Phillips Library, Peabody Essex Museum, Rowley, MA.



women who chose to ride in skirts. [Figure 6] For 19th century New England women, the bicycle was not only a vehicle for freedom, but a symbol of liberation. For New England bicycle manufacturers and retailers, the *femme nouvelle* was a rhetorical mechanism to engage these feelings among their emerging female clientele.

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**Sarah Bilotta**, (she/her) is a design historian, collections cataloger, and writer. She is a candidate for the MSt in the History of Design at the University of Oxford. She also serves as Assistant Cataloging Librarian for the Peabody Essex Museum and Library and Research Fellow for the Museum of Russian Icons. Her research focuses on depictions of women in American and British advertising 1890-1945.



The Bicycle Craze of the 1890s presented challenges to women's wardrobe - as Barbara Rusch noted in "Loose Women: Defying the Constraints and Conventions of Victorian Undergarments" (*Ephemera Journal* 23-2 January 2021) and as Sarah Billotta mentions here. For her book *Bikes and Bloomers, Victorian Women Inventors and Their Extraordinary Cycle Wear* (Goldsmiths Press 2018) Kat Jungnickel investigated patent records at the Birmingham (England) Free Library, and found a wealth of inventive solutions to the skirt challenge. Here are a few: the first from 1890, the others from 1895.





# The Essence of Ephemerality

BY RICHARD SHEAFF

Figure 1 is a souvenir from a balloon flight sponsored by J. P. Pomeroy but with the aeronaut E. T. Owings, who, like many other balloonists of the era, affected the title of Professor.

This date in 1882 was not Pomeroy's first or only attempt to sponsor a balloon ascension. For the 4th of July in 1881, he sponsored a balloon ascent arranged by circus proprietor John M. Kinney of the Circus Royal, which was performing in town that date. It was advertised that "J. P. Pomeroy might ascend with either Signor Pedanto or Lizzie Wise [of the circus troupe], whoever was 'the coolest and bravest.' As Kinney described it, 'everything went wrong.' Pomeroy went up alone (being shot at as he descended), and Kinney was held responsible for the disappointment. Pomeroy was said to have lost \$200 on the enterprise, the gas alone costing him \$101. On August 11, Pomeroy advertised a balloon for sale."<sup>1</sup>

J. P. Pomeroy had arrived in Atchison, Kansas in October of 1878, "in the interest of the Central Branch Union Pacific Ry., being land commissioner, purchasing agent, and general manager of the extension of the road beyond Waterville, Marshall County. He is now settling old loan interests of the Atchison, Colorado & Pacific Branch, which involves settlement of debts contracted along the route during its construction. He is also now general agent of the road, and handles all the varieties of coal used in operating it, his business amounting to from 8,000 to 10,000 cars of soft coal per year, and from 3,000 to 5,000 cars of hard coal. Mr. Pomeroy was born and received his education in the State of Ohio. He remained in the State, engaged in mercantile pursuits, until 1865, when he made an extended tour of Europe, remaining abroad until 1869. On his return he engaged in the manufacture of boots and shoes. In 1875, he again made a visit of about two years in Europe, removing to

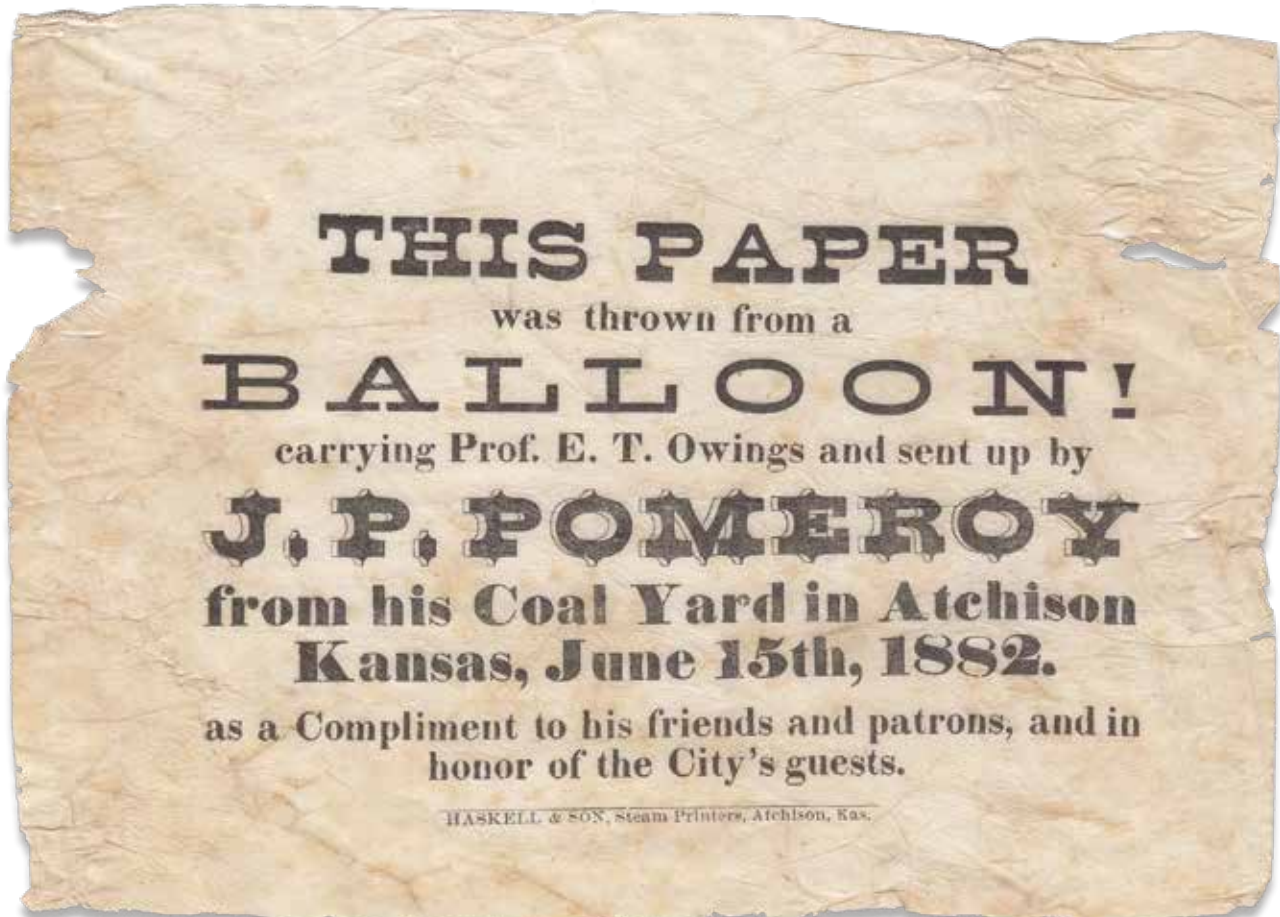


Figure 1. Perhaps the epitome and exemplar of "ephemera": a handbill printed in 1882 on a light, flimsy paper created to be cast to the winds from an a drifting balloon as a souvenir for anyone who might happen to find one. It was made to be thrown away! To the delight of a modern collector, this ephemeral scrap of paper was also printed using a variety of different typefaces, and the printer is identified: Haskell & Son in Atchison, Kansas. (7" x 5", Sheaff Collection)



Figure 2. 1885 chromolithograph, 24 x 35 inches, of Excelsior Ginger Ale - the implication in other advertising for John Klee's product was that the carbonation helped the balloon to rise. [Library of Congress]

Atchison soon after his return, and remaining since that time a citizen of that city. Mr. Pomeroy is now president of the Atchison & Southwestern R. R.; vice-president of Exchange National Bank of Atchison; vice-president of the Frankfort National Bank of Frankfort, Kansas, and president of the Atchison Opera House Company."<sup>2</sup>

In the *History of Hill City [Kansas]* by Lowell Beecher, Pomeroy is described as "a Boston multimillionaire, heir to the Pomeroy Coal Company fortune, and a speculator." According to the *Daily Commonwealth* of Topeka, a major celebration was planned for June 15, 1882 in celebration of the opening of the Missouri Pacific railroad to Omaha, including a round-trip excursion train from Omaha to Atchison. As part of the day-long festivities, J.P. "Coal King" Pomeroy planned to sponsor a "mammoth balloon from his coal yards at private expense." It was expected that 15,000 people would enjoy these "grand attractions." However, the following day's issue of the *Atchison Daily Patriot* reported that "Pomeroy's balloon collapsed yesterday before it got under headway. After the trouble and expense Mr. Pomeroy had to go to, to provide this entertainment for our citizens, the failure was of course a disappointment." Pomeroy attempted the balloon ascent again on July 4, but it failed again, so he sent off for a brand new balloon, which on some later date successfully launched.

Reporting on that eventual 1882 ascent, witness J. A. Patterson of Sonoma California reported "The first ascent I saw Prof. Owings make was at Atchison, Kansas, and the balloon sailed away ten or twelve miles, and when a long distance up in the air, we saw it begin to descend very rapidly. We subsequently learned that the balloon burst on the side, which caused the rapid descent. He came down in a newly plowed field, and as he stepped out of the basket, the balloon got away from him, and was afterward recovered five or six miles further off. As the balloon burst on the side sufficient gas remained in the top to prevent a collapse, and at the same time to break the force of the descent, but he appeared to us to come down very fast."<sup>3</sup>

The tissue paper souvenir shown in Figure 1 was clearly created for use on the June 15 flight. Given that no ascent seems to have happened on that day, it is unclear how this souvenir was distributed. Perhaps it was given out on the day of the also unsuccessful July 4 ascent? Or dropped from the eventual successful balloon flight at a later date? Or never widely dispersed at all? These remain as open questions for the moment.

In the same article, Patterson reported on two other Owings ballooning adventures he had witnessed, both in Kansas City. The next "ascent was very nice, and he sailed away in the clouds a distance of twenty five miles, and came down near Olathe. The last one was not a remarkable one. There was not gas enough in



Figure 3. 1880s chromolithographed trade card for Van Houten cocoa. [Sheaff Collection]



Figure 4. Huge letterpress poster to advertise the balloon ascension of “Mr. Wise” on April 27, 1839. John Wise’s 163rd ascension was from the court of the Crystal Palace exhibition in New York City, June 8, 1854. In 1859 Wise carried the very first U.S. air mail in his balloon *Jupiter*. [William L. Clements Library, photograph by Richard Sheaff]

the balloon to permit it to rise with him, and it went up about a hundred feet, and came down again. It was then after sundown, and the gas contracted; so he took off the basket and his coat, hat and shoes, and went up sitting on a box at the end of the rope. He had determined that the people should not be disappointed. There was a hill near by, which was covered with trees; and, as he passed over the tops of these, he would reach out one foot, and give them a kick, and this would send the balloon several feet into the air. In this way he proceeded a mile or two before he descended.”

The *Sonoma Democrat* announced on May 16, 1885 that “E. T. Owings, the noted aeronaut who has made forty-three ascensions is desirous of giving a balloon ascension in this city on July 4th. He proposes to construct a balloon to contain 25,000 cubic feet of gas and has already made arrangements to secure the fluid from the Gas Company. This balloon would be seventy-five feet in height if constructed. Last Fourth of July he made the celebrated ascent at Keokuk, Iowa and was supposed to be lost for several days.”

Owings had many a close shave. Back on July 5, 1883 the *Sonoma Democrat* reported that “Professor Owings made a balloon ascension here yesterday afternoon. The balloon was recovered last evening near Burnside, but Owings is missing and thought to

be dead.” It turns out that he was not, as he made the 1885 Kansas ascensions mentioned above, and numerous reported others.

The July 9, 1885 edition of the *Sonoma Democrat* described “An Extraordinary Balloon Trip! A Santa Rosa correspondent of the *San Francisco Bulletin* writes an account of a remarkable balloon trip in Sonoma county on the Fourth. E. T. Owings, aeronaut, . . . rose to a considerable elevation, and was swept by a southeast current in the direction of the range between Napa and Sonoma counties. The balloon then crossed the Guillicos valley, passed over the ranges just south of Hood mountain, and dropped out of sight of the Santa Rosa spectators, on the Napa side of the range, twenty miles distant. The aeronaut had first thought of landing in the Guillicos valley, but a current of air lifted the balloon over the high ridge on the east. As he passed over, he threw out his anchor, which failed to catch, and the balloon was taken by a current of wind down the other side quite close to the earth. There the anchor caught in a tree, tilted the basket, and Owings fell to the ground, bruised, but not seriously hurt. Relieved of his weight, the balloon slipped its anchor, shot up into the air, and striking an opposite current of air, started homeward. It passed over the town of Santa Rosa at a great elevation, and sailed west toward the sea. After going some distance west, it began to descend rapidly, took a reverse current, and passed a third time over the city of Santa Rosa. It seemed at one time as though the balloon would get back to the very spot it sailed from, but when a few hundred feet from the earth, it was borne by a current just outside the city limits, and lodged about a mile from where it started. It had made a flight of sixty miles in two hours and fifty minutes, and ended within one mile of its starting point in as good condition as when it was first launched.”

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> *Ballooning*, S. L. Kotar and J. E. Gessler, McFarland & Company, 2011, page 266
- <sup>2</sup> *History of the State of Kansas*, William G. Cutler, A. T. Andreas, Chicago 1883
- <sup>3</sup> *Sonoma Democrat*, June 30, 1885

**Dick Sheaff** our Society president, is a retired graphic and communications designer, who worked over the years with numerous businesses, colleges and other clients. He designed or art-directed over 500 U.S.

postage stamps. Dick collects many sorts of ephemera, researches various subjects and writes frequent articles, with a particular interest in design and typography. He also maintains an ephemera-related, non-commercial website [www.sheaff-ephemera.com](http://www.sheaff-ephemera.com)





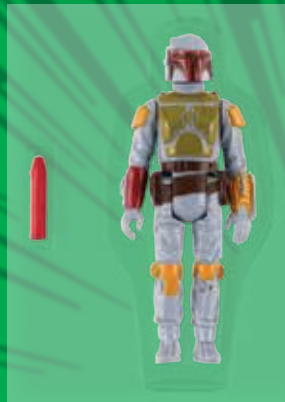
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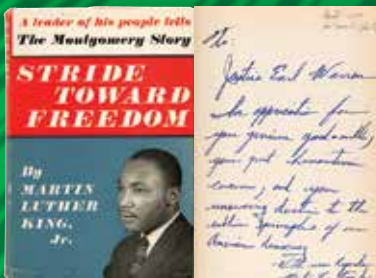
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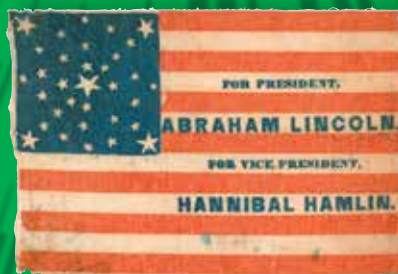
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Mug shot of Emma Goldman, "The High Priestess of Anarchy," silver prints, 1901. Sold October 2018 for \$10,625.

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