

# THE EPHEMERA JOURNAL

VOLUME 25, NUMBER 2

JANUARY 2023

## The Lithography of Power and the Power of Lithography

BY MARK RUCKER

California was the land of opportunity in the mid-19th Century, and William Tell Coleman took full advantage of it. He arrived in the Territory a pioneer, became a businessman, founded a citizen's "vigilante" organization, and entered politics. He had a keen interest in both technology and money, and used lithography to market his shipping business, and later, to enact a scheme so grandiose that only the most elaborate lithographic techniques could serve it. He advertised his shipping line with "Clipper Ship Cards," using the brightest colors and, often, audacious names to catch the attention of would-be clients. Later, Coleman used stunning lithographic images to help secure his control of the Pacific Coast canning industry from San Diego to Alaska (Figure 1).

William T. led an exciting life, experiencing many of the frontier adventures of 19th-century America. Born in Kentucky in 1824, young William was soon an orphan and grew up with relatives to the north. Once grown, he took a railroad job in Illinois, ran a lumber mill in the wilds of Wisconsin, got a degree from St. Louis University, and then passed the bar in Missouri. He had a head for business, a born capitalist. Drawn by the lure of the Western unknown, he put his plans together in St. Louis and set out for the Californian gold fields in early 1849. On arrival, finding that selling hardware to miners was a quicker way to success than mining itself, he set up a mercantile business in Sacramento, the William T. Coleman Company. He moved next to the gold fields setting up a mercantile in Hangtown, soon to be known as Placerville. Almost without hesitation, he took his profits to San Francisco to re-establish his business in the city. He continued to move at a fast pace.

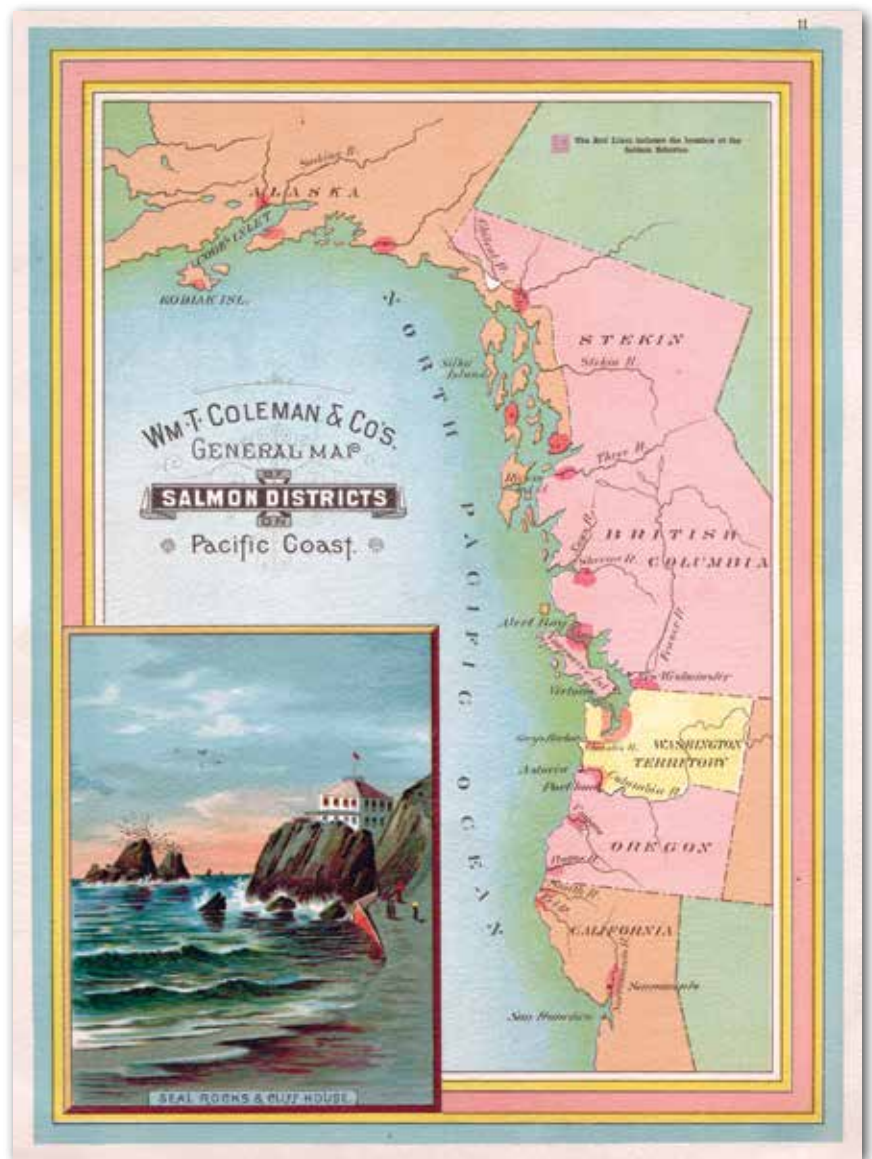


Figure 1: West Coast Map page 11, from Wm. T. Coleman & Co's Exhibit of Californian Products Showing Location of Industries, 1885. Locations of canneries along the Pacific Coast show the scope of Coleman's salmon operation.

*Continued on Page 4*

# The Ephemera Journal

The  
Ephemera  
of Society  
America

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Volume 25, Number 2, January 2023

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

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Deadlines: April 1, August 1,  
December 1.

## *Members and Friends*

The Portland ESA mid-year meeting in October was a roaring success, due to the amazing organization of Glenn and Judith Mason of Cultural Images. We visited the Oregon Historical Society, the Portland Chinatown Museum, Bolling & Co, and participated in a wonderful presentation on ephemera at the McMenamin's Kennedy School theater, an Oregon icon. The next day we all piled into vans and drove to Eugene to visit the University of Oregon's Special Collections. Then we drove to Corvallis to visit the Oregon State University's Archives and Special Collections. Andre and Anne Chaves graciously hosted us for a tour in their home of their collections of early private press, Roycroft and textile design. We capped that off with a presentation by ESA board member, Barbara Fahs Charles, on the Jantzen Beach Carousel at the Architectural Heritage Center.

The ESA was also very visible at the ABAA Boston Book fair in November. This being the premier book fair in New England, it attracted the region's top collectors and institutional buyers. Many visitors took advantage of the chocolates handed out by volunteer board members Beth Carroll-Horrocks, Tom Horrocks, and Tamar Zimmerman — the price of a chocolate being listening to the ESA membership pitch.

To further awareness of ephemera in the social media sphere, we have identified a young ephemerist as our digital upload specialist. Griff Maloney has experience cataloging his father's large collection of theater magic ephemera. Griff has agreed to work with the communications committee and oversee the social media postings of the ESA's digital presence. We plan to bring him on board, along with some very talented new ESA board members, in the New Year.

March is fast approaching and the ESA has met the challenge of assembling a first class conference and fair in Old Greenwich, CT. The conference is set, the speakers are confirmed and the theme, "*From Here To There ~ The Ephemera Of Travel!*" is something not to be missed. Even at this stage, the Ephemera Fair is almost fully booked with many vendors signed up, offering a wide range of ephemera. For more information visit our website at [www.ephemerasociety.org](http://www.ephemerasociety.org)

I'm really looking forward to meeting up with ESA members old and new at the conference and fair on March 16-19, 2023.

*David*

David Lilburne, President



**From Here to There**  
The ephemera of travel

Ephemera 43  
Ephemera Society of America  
March 16-19, 2023  
Hyatt Regency Hotel  
Old Greenwich, Connecticut

# Boston 2026 World Expo

By Yamil H. Kouri, Jr.

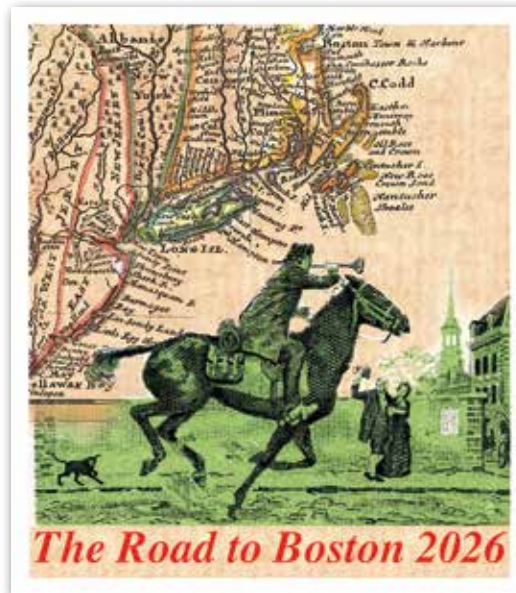
For more than a century the United States has held a world philatelic exhibition once every decade. Boston 2026 World Expo, the 12<sup>th</sup> U.S. international philatelic exhibition, will take place on May 23-30, 2026 at the Boston Convention and Exhibition Center (BCEC). These shows are visited by tens of thousands of collectors and their families, from the United States and almost every country in the world. Boston 2026 World Expo will also be part of the local celebration of the nation's 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary, for which a much higher attendance is expected. Admission to the show is free.

Recently, philatelic exhibits have incorporated more items categorized as "ephemera," and now a U.S. category allows for an unlimited use of collateral material to tell a story. National philatelic exhibitions in other countries, such as the United Kingdom, routinely include an exhibit section devoted to ephemera. Boston 2026 World Expo's Organizing Committee is committed to the promotion of ephemera collecting and exhibiting. A section of the approximately 4,000 exhibit frames, holding 16 pages each, will be reserved for ephemera. A committee formed by members of the Ephemera Society of America (ESA) will be in charge of selecting and judging these exhibits.

Nearly two hundred specialized societies, organizations and postal administrations will have booths at the Expo. A subsidized booth will be offered to the ESA. In addition to the exhibits and booths, there will be several museum displays, numerous events aimed at the public in general, and hundreds of meetings and seminars (meeting rooms of various sizes are provided at no cost to show participants).

Collectors often collect in multiple categories. We are reaching out to antiquarians book dealers, dealers in paper money and other dealers in related categories. This is an excellent opportunity for ephemera dealers to increase their visibility and reach a larger community of potential customers, especially when most of the booths at the show will consist of non-competing philatelic dealers and auctioneers.

Please let us know if you have any questions. I hope to see many of you at Boston 2026 World Expo! [yamil.Kouri@Boston2026.org](mailto:yamil.Kouri@Boston2026.org)



## BCEC:

- 352,000 contiguous, unobstructed square feet; dealers' bourse center front section
- 2 miles from Boston Logan International Airport, half mile from local hub for trains and buses in the northeast corridor.
- less than a mile from Mass Turnpike (Exit 135); 1,340 self-park and 600 valet-parking spaces
- 8 hotels within a short walking distance. Westin Seaport District (the show's HQ) and Omni Boston Seaport, physically connected to BCEC
- wide selection of booth sizes, configurations and locations; half-show option of 4 days available; combined hotel/booth package for dealers will. Show decorator, Heritage, provides loading service as part of the booth cost.

## In this Issue...

Leading with William T. Coleman's map of the Pacific Northwest honors the extraordinary series of tours planned by Glenn and Judith Mason for our October mid-year meeting in Oregon. Our valentine offering from **Dale Forster** was featured at one of the Portland events.

**Mark Rucker's** essay on Coleman and his entrepreneurial vision features a reconstruction and in-depth examination of a single great piece of ephemera. It also reminds us of Coleman's role in the production of Clipper Ship cards - which will be the subject of the banquet speech at Ephemera 34 in March.

**Rachel Kane's** research on Paper Doll Houses was inspired by childhood fascinations. Her article is based on her student presentation at Ephemera 33 - and we celebrate her present status as a museum curator. **Cece Otto's** piece is also very personal - a souvenir of her 3,000 mile performance experience along the Lincoln Highway. Her thoughts on travel can serve as an introduction to the Ephemera 34 conference, From Here to There.

**Dennis Johnson and Jane MacKnight's** essay on date labels is a good example of collecting and researching modern ephemera — as more of what we have considered ephemera remains in the electronic virtual, the visual appeal of packaging increases.

—Diane DeBlois, editor



Figure 2: Photograph of William Tell Coleman about age forty-five.

In 1887 near the end of his life, the *San Francisco Call* newspaper described Coleman as “fortunate in possessing a personal appearance in accord with his character. It is that of a man of physical as well as mental power. Kindliness is written as distinctly across the upper part of his face as firmness and energy across his lower. He is tall and massive, has a large, well-balanced head, a complexion of remarkable freshness, a keen, steady eye, a courteous, approachable manner, and a voice that has in it the charm of good nature and simplicity of character. But underneath the genial exterior lies an iron will and inflexible principles, as all who have taken them to test ... have found.”<sup>1</sup> (See Figure 2)

Civic minded and reportedly generous, Coleman looked out for himself and for the struggling young city of San Francisco. With his Midas touch, operating his storefront near the harbor docks, he rapidly became a shipping agent, hiring crews to unload and load cargo of all kinds, while expanding his connections in the community. Rampant crime made life raw for early settlers in coastal California. Lawlessness and corruption in the police force led to the formation of citizens groups, vigilantes, organized to protect the city core. In 1851, Coleman founded and led The Vigilance Committee of San Francisco.

As Coleman continued to develop his shipping business, his civic activities likewise broadened, bringing him accolades locally, but criticism of the vigilante activity from political officials in Sacramento.

The success of the William T. Coleman Company was largely due to its connections with clipper ship builders in New York and New England. Speedy clippers - the fastest mode of transport for either human or commercial cargo - built in Boston and Brooklyn became part of Coleman’s California Line for San Francisco. Coleman had the opportunity to bring in essential hard goods from the East Coast and Europe for the young city of San Francisco and the gold fields up north. Riding high on his profits, he would then send the ships back to East Coast ports, loaded with treasure from Asia and the West Coast. His wealth ballooned.

Coleman’s Line hired Nesbitt & Company of New York to produce colorful and imaginatively designed lithographic cards to promote each ship. Apart from the elaborate graphics, the card included the ship’s size and attributes, its speed, and the sailing details. Among the ships in Coleman’s fleet were: *William Tell*, *Challenger*, *David Crockett*, *Governor Morton*, *Neptune’s Favorite*, *Osborn Howes*, *Spitfire*, *Westward Ho*, *Wm. Chamberlain*, *Bostonian*, *Hornet*, *George Peabody*, *Derby*, *Cherubim* (Figure 3), *Emerald Isle*, *Sea Nymph*, *Dictator*, *Messenger*, *Anglo Saxon*, and *Daring*. (Figure 4) “Clipper cards represent the first pronounced use of color in American advertising art. They are invariably the most eye-catching items in any Gold Rush collection ... Relatively few (perhaps 3500) cards exist today, and most reside in permanent institutional collections.”<sup>2</sup> The clipper ships sailed steadily through the boom years of mineral extraction in the Sierra Mountains, supporting Northern California’s increasing population. Over time, the shipping industry grew and transformed, and Coleman’s business morphed into a different creature entirely.

The drumbeat of profit was continuous as Coleman sought out new areas for development. He made much of his willingness to work in partnership with companies or individuals already established in their production lines. By 1886, he was ready to amalgamate his accumulated holdings, contracts, associations, partnerships, agreements, and offerings. These were summarized in a gigantic, full color, announcement of what was to come in America’s West. The William T. Coleman Company attempted to outdo *everybody* with this promotional marvel.

The 32-page, eleven-by-fourteen-inch full-color promotional booklet was loaded with images of lovely new lands and new offerings. I was fortunate enough to find one-half of this pamphlet, after a dealer had broken the piece. The front and back covers have major damage, which may be why the piece was dismantled. Previously, the owner discovered that there are only three known copies and it is likely that not many were produced. There are no listings on WorldCat. Maybe this production was produced as a “feeler” – a short run of prototypes to test the market before taking the plunge.

Through photocopies, I was able to recover almost all of the publication. This is a significant business



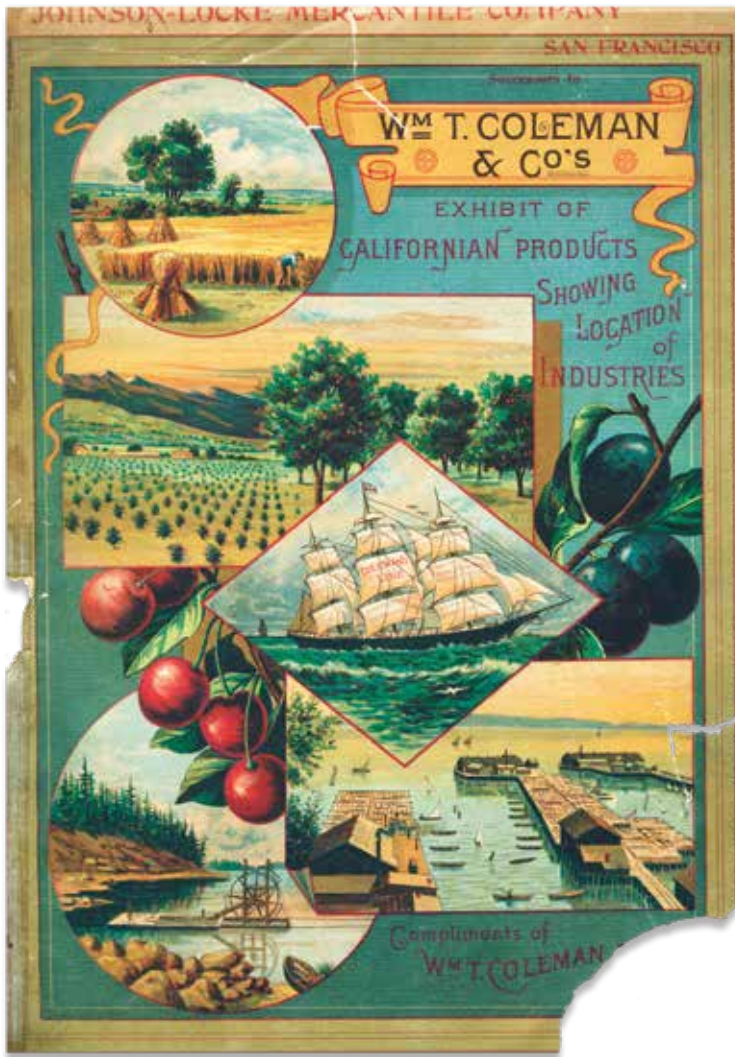


Figure 5: The damaged front cover for the Coleman promotional pamphlet shows a clipper ship image in the very center. There is no identification of a printer on any of the images in the pamphlet; Bufford of Boston would be a candidate.

Hamilton, and London. This outreach is impressive and is substantiated with statistics. On page four, images of buildings, ships, and maps illustrate the company's role as shipping and commission merchants. Included is information about the shipping department, the insurance department, and most important, the commission department. Coleman served as agent for the Globe Marine Insurance Company of Great Britain and Chinese Marine Insurance Company of Hong Kong.

The following pages depict canned salmon in five different varieties from Sacramento to British Columbia rivers, descriptions of dried fruit and its SoCal sources, and illustrations of oranges and other citrus from Los Angeles. The next section describes the 'Borax Branch.' Selling goods to locals along the Pacific Coast, this branch of the company delivered pig iron, anthracite, chemicals, coal, borax, starch, groceries, chocolate, and canned meats, as well as grain alcohol, rye, rum,

bourbon, whiskey and schnapps. Page nine shows a map of the Sacramento River, the "jugular vein" of the California Gold Rush, clustered with its canneries offering fishermen a way to market after the gigantic salmon run each year. Turn the page for a similar map of the Fraser River in B.C., again emphasizing canneries. There seemed to be no cross border commercial problems at this time. A map of the entire Pacific Coast designates locations from California into Oregon, north into Washington Territory, then into British Columbia, up through a territory labeled 'Stekin,' and finally into Alaska. (Figure 1)

Tables of information on the following pages list canneries and their locations in all States and Provinces, with special attention to salmon packing, enumerating the total cases packed from major rivers for the past three years. "We have direct communications with all the packing districts of the Pacific Coast and are prepared to give accurate and detailed information concerning this industry. We are agents for the leading packers of the coast, whose brands have a world wide reputation," the copy reads. Subsequent scenes depict William T's five-story Manhattan storefront at 71 Hudson Street and an

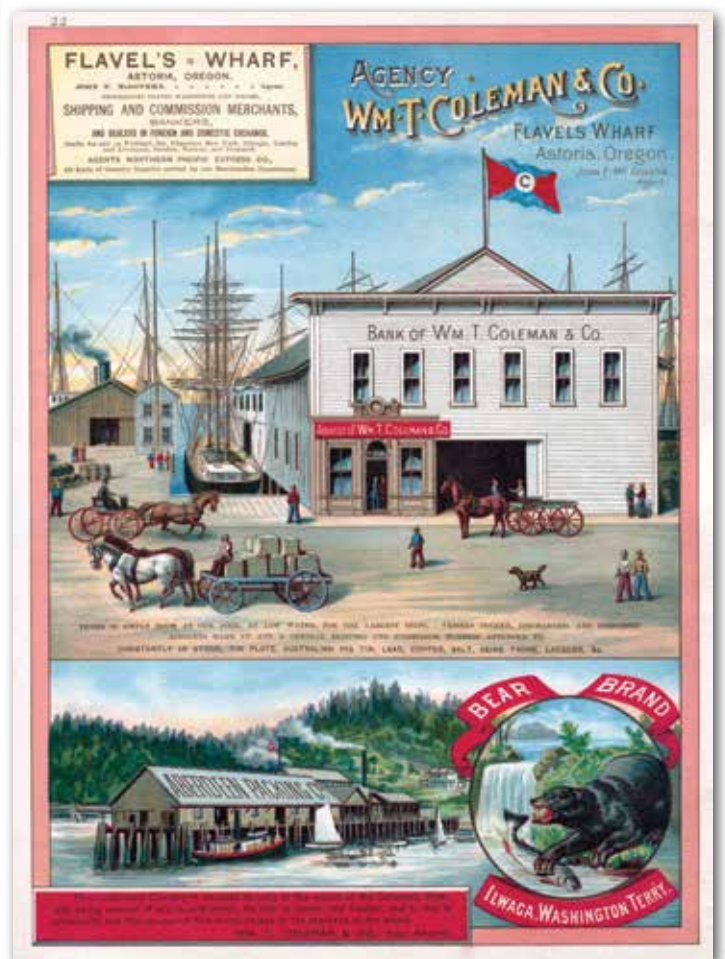


Figure 6: Oregon Bank page 22. The top panel shows the wharf location of the Astoria, Oregon Coleman and Company Bank. The Aberdeen Packing Company for Bear Brand salmon is shown below.



Figure 7: Salmon Poster page 23. Coleman's beloved Scottish heritage is celebrated in this im-age of kilt-wearing fishermen.

underground winery with enormous casks of California vintages of Claret, Port, Burgundy, etc. We are shown the East coast shoreline processing works, both canning and merchandising, while another page showcases the Chicago storefront, bringing Pacific delicacies to the Great Plains by rail.

After the lists, statistics and specifications, comes the gorgeous lithography. Bold color images, sell Southern California Navel oranges, 'Malta Blood and Seedlings,' and 'Mediterranean Treats,' to be found from agents in all principal markets of the United States. An entire page is reserved for raisins, sold in boxes to the public, and described as "Extra Grade." Acting as agent for the various agricultural businesses along the Pacific coast, Coleman hoped to unite the efforts of these growing entities into a conglomeration held together by his shipping prowess. His agency outlet in Los Angeles made a deal with the McPherson Brothers, a company already established in the grape-growing business. Illustrations of the verdant McPherson hills and fields, with a woman carrying grapes, have a decidedly Italian flavor.

One unusual page, a promotion for oranges, shows a young, warmly-dressed girl standing in the snow, smoke curling from the chimney of her distant home. These oranges won a gold medal in a New Orleans competition, and come from Riverside Colony Specialists

in California. E.J. Baldwin's Santa Anita Vineyards in the San Gabriel Valley was another partner, who created a dramatic display of goods for various venues. The pamphlet tells us that "Mr. Baldwin has received the Gold Medals at the California State Fair '81, San Mateo and Santa Clara Agricultural Associations '81, Mechanics Fair Portland, Oregon '83, Mechanics Institute Fair '83, Mechanics Institute Fair in San Francisco '85, and the World's Fair New Orleans '85, for the best display of Domestic wines, best White Wines, best Port Wine, best Grape Brandy, best Claret and best Sherry Wine." Also - "The alcohol could be purchased in bottles, cases, barrels, halves, quarters and puncheons."

In Oregon, using the nearby Aberdeen Packing Company, Coleman released the Bear Brand of canned salmon from Washington Territory (Figure 6). Thistle Brand canned salmon also gets a full page litho, featuring two Scotsmen in kilts fishing a bucolic river. The copy asserts that "In Scotland (the home of salmon) it is declared to be the equal of any fish ever caught in the tweed." (Figure 7)

The next affiliation is the British American Packing Co. on the Fraser and Skeena Rivers of British Columbia, which packed fish for export all the way to Great Britain. The image for Indian Brand salmon shows a native American with a spear and fish, a



Figure 8: BC Native Salmon page 27. Two major aspects of Coleman's business appear on the same page: Salmon is promoted in the top panel; Borax in the bottom.

sailing ship moored in the harbor behind him. Below this we see both Coleman's incipient interest in a new industry and the seeds of his empire's eventual collapse, all in one picture. The Smith Brothers had begun mining, refining and selling Borax from their desert locations, encouraging its many household uses. In 1886, Coleman was their sole agent and promoter. The extensive Harmony Borax Works, shown as a series of long processing sheds in the mountains with the famous mule teams pulling transport wagons, probably never grew to look like this. (Figure 8)

The final pages of the pamphlet ally Coleman with two fruit canning firms, the San Mateo Packing Company and California Packing Company. Colorful can labels are illustrated, including Maiden Brand

pears. The full page inside back cover shows a scene of cheerful female pickers at work in an orange grove or apple orchard. This is a panoramic view of the operations at The Golden Gate Packing Co., San Jose, California. the text proclaims: "The Cannery is in close proximity to the orchards, and fruit is placed in cans the same day it is picked. ... Skilled white labor only is employed, many of the operatives being students at the Normal College at San Jose." Anti-Chinese sentiment in the U.S. at the time, particularly in California, led many businesses to advertise that their work was performed exclusively by "white" labor.

An exciting page for ephemerists, particularly collectors of labels, is the back cover, a "collage" of can labels from all the products put forward in this booklet. (Figure 9) There is Silver Side Salmon, San Lorenzo Peaches, San Mateo Pears, Sierra Madre Plums, Fisherman's Brand Salmon, Lusk Apricots, White Star Brand Salmon and several other brands. The label images, though small, appear to be well designed and reflect established product lines. However, these labels are not widely known now. They have never been offered to any collectors known to this

writer, though some may lurk in collections somewhere. It is entirely possible that these labels were never printed or used, but sprang from the imagination of a creative lithographer.

So much information, so much work, and so much beautiful lithography went into this magnificent presentation. But it was a dream that did not last very long. It is difficult to know how much of this extravagant project Coleman was able to realize. He may have made business arrangements with all these food-processing companies, but it is possible that their association was being used to make his holdings look much larger than they were.

As the 1880s progressed, Coleman became more enamored with the Borax business. He poured most of



Figure 9: This spectacular display of labels illustrates the back cover of the Coleman pamphlet.

his wealth into making that industry successful. When the economic collapse of 1887 arrived, the government decided to extend protection to a number of important national industries. Despite Coleman's economic clout on the West Coast, Washington was not impressed and left the Borax Industry without assistance. "Coleman failed because he undertook to develop the resources of California more rapidly perhaps than the slow march of commerce warranted,"<sup>3</sup> wrote biographer James Scherer. It was only two years after the printing of this pamphlet that Coleman's empire had completely disappeared – with one exception. Coleman's Mustard is on grocer's shelves to this day.

William T. Coleman took advantage of all the business opportunities a young California could offer. But he

outpaced himself to fulfill a fantasy that, combined with some ill luck, led to spectacular failure.

### Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Scherer, James A.B., *The Lion of the Vigilantes*, Bobbs Merrill, Indianapolis, 1939, p.308.pp. 297-8.
- <sup>2</sup> Roberts, Bruce D., "Rare Americana: Schwed Collection of Clipper Ship Sailing Cards", PBA Galleries Auction Catalog for October 21, 2010, p.66.
- <sup>3</sup> Scherer, James A.B., *op. cit.*, p.308.

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- Forbes, Allan and Eastman, Ralph, *Yankee Ship Sailing Cards, Volumes I, II, III*, State Street Trust Company, Auction Catalog for June 13, 1990, Boston, 1949 – 1952.
- PBA Galleries, "Rare Americana: Schwed Collection of Clipper Ship Sailing Cards", Auction Catalog for October 21, 2010
- Scherer, James A.B., *The Lion of the Vigilantes*, Bobbs Merrill, Indianapolis, 1939.
- Siegel Gallery, "The Schwed Collection of United States 19<sup>th</sup> Century Clipper Ship Cards," New York, 1990.
- Wikipedia, William T. Coleman article.

**Mark Rucker** has operated Transcendental Graphics, a publishing company and picture agency, since 1986. From that time on he has dedicated the company to gathering the most comprehensive and beautiful image library achievable, with specific focus on Baseball. Seeking more visual stimulus, he expanded the agency to include historical images of all kinds, particularly in the genres of photography and lithography. With digitization, The Rucker Archive became the electronic brand of the company. Mark lives in the Okanogan Valley, the wine country of British Columbia.



# A Gold Rush Valentine

BY DALE FORSTER

Dale Forster gave a spirited presentation on valentines at the Kennedy School in Portland, Oregon as part of our mid-year meeting in October 2022. The most unusual example that he showed was a layered creation on a lace paper base, with painting on silk, added die-cuts, and a small envelope under the banner “A trifle towards Housekeeping.” (Figure 1) Inside the envelope was a manuscript poem, a folded printed poem, and a tiny silk sack tied with ribbon. The envelope indicated that it was sent to a Miss Georgiana Ferrin, care of Mr. H. Prentiss at 16 Bulfinch Street in Boston, carried by a private company, Towle’s City Post. (Figure 2)

This urban delivery service was established around 1846 by Towle, an employee of another private post, Hale & Co. In 1848 Towle partnered with Cheever, but the name remained the same until 1852. Delivering an envelope within Boston cost two cents.

Georgiana (1833-1895) was born in Charlestown, and in 1854 married Reuben



Figure 1



Figure 2

Willard Reed (1825-1900) who in 1849 was a harness maker in Boston. The newly weds settled at the Reed family farm in Lexington. Georgiana’s valentine was sent to Henry Prentiss’s house on Bulfinch, whose music store was at 33 Court Street. She may have been one of Prentiss’s music students.

And, now, the valentine: the base is Dobbs lace paper, slightly under quarto size (9.75” x 8”). Other examples of valentines with the “trifle towards housekeeping” banner have miniature place settings tucked into the small attached envelope, and

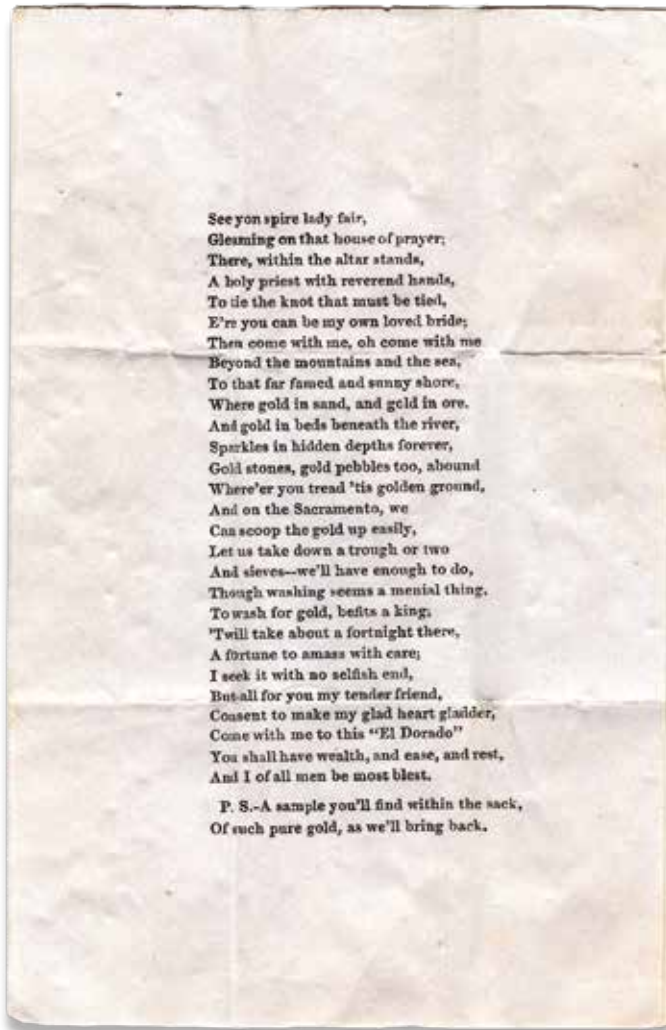


Figure 3

others have similar die-cuts of doves and cupids pulling a loving couple in a fanciful vehicle. The printed poem included here is the same as one enclosed in an octavo valentine on different lace paper owned by Michael Russo - his poem has one more line at the bottom: "February 14th." (Figure 3)

Gold was discovered at a mill owned by a Sacramento pioneer in January 1848. By the end of the year, the U.S. President's announcement of California treasure led to a massive 'rush' of prospective miners. Early in 1849, someone composed this verse, promising riches to a lady love who would accompany the writer to the gold fields. The small sack "of pure gold" was missing from Michael's copy, but is present in Dale's.

Dale's small envelope also included a manuscript poem — perhaps written by young Reuben Reed, starting the flame that led to marriage: (Figure 4)

*Friendship, like love, is but a name,  
Unless to one you start the flame.  
The child whom many parents share,  
Has seldom known a parent's care!  
Tis thus with friendship; who depend  
On many surely find a friend!*

*Valentine*

*Feb 14, 1849*

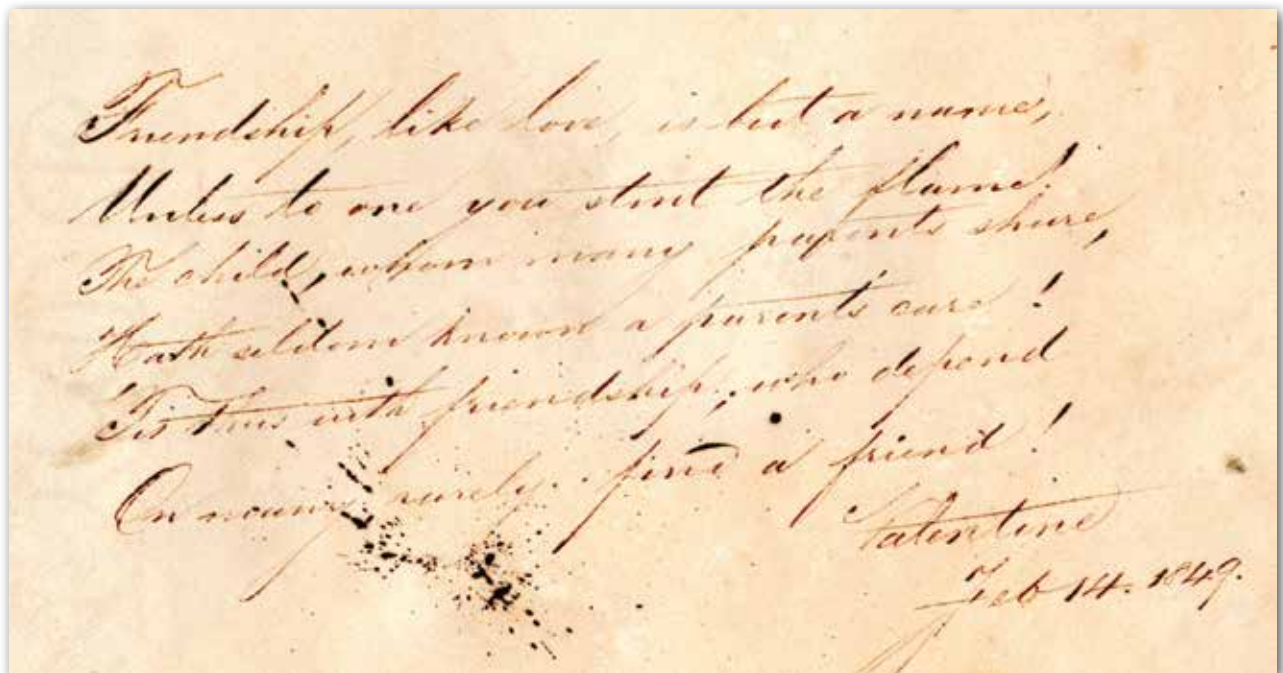


Figure 4

# Home Making for Future Homemakers:

## *Paper Doll Houses and Instructive Womanhood*

BY RACHEL KANE

In popular imagination, paper dolls are pictured with cherubic faces and elaborate costumes. As fashion illustrations, they recall the dress-up games of childhood. However, the history of paper dolls offers much more than dress-up figures. This category is expansive, encompassing paper houses, furniture, food, and toys. Outside of their role as miniature mannequins, paper dolls lived in their own ephemeral world constructed both by the children at play and by the illustrators, publishers, and authors involved in this industry. Drawing on the social ideals of their makers, the version of reality espoused by these objects was passed down to their juvenile users

through imaginative play. Paper doll houses present both a mimesis of form and of ideology, teaching children about their social role through model interiors and scripted playtime participation. As children constructed their doll's homes out of board, paper, and glue, they simultaneously constructed their own idealized social understandings of femininity, domesticity, and their future lives. The paper doll world is an effective example of the role of children's toys as learning mechanisms, transforming meaning from imagined spaces to the real world.

While paper toys have a long history, mass-produced paper dolls became widely available during the nineteenth century. Technological advancements in color printing contributed to a meteoric rise in women's magazines and children's books in the early twentieth century, bringing paper toys directly into middle- and upper-class homes in the United States. This new market shifted employment patterns; female illustrators and authors were hired to produce a product marketed to mothers and their daughters. Frederick Abbott Stokes, head of his eponymous publishing house, created a new children's department at the turn of the century, explaining that "the heads of these departments are women of ability, education and experience in the field which they cultivate."<sup>1</sup> The many female illustrators who gained fame and economic success in the U.S. during this period, included Rose O'Neil, Grace G. Drayton, Sheila Young, Helen Hokinson, Nell Brinkley, Ethel Hays, and Fay King. Companies like Campbell's Soup and Jell-O hired many of these illustrators to draw their advertisements. The women who designed paper dolls and their paper environments often drew on their own lifestyle expertise in traveling, child rearing, household maintenance, hobbies, and fashion.

Earlier syndicated publications depicted home interiors in detail, even in story illustrations or political cartoons, subtly reinforcing the aesthetics of home-life for their audience. At the turn of the century, publications geared towards the housewife, like *The Ladies' Home Journal* (1883-2016), *The Woman's Home Companion* (1873-1957), *Pictorial Review* (1899-1937), and *The Delineator* (1869-1939) featured advice and products for both the general home and for the inhabitants of the children's paper world (Figure 1). Typically, paper dolls were issued in series with central protagonists like Lettie Lane

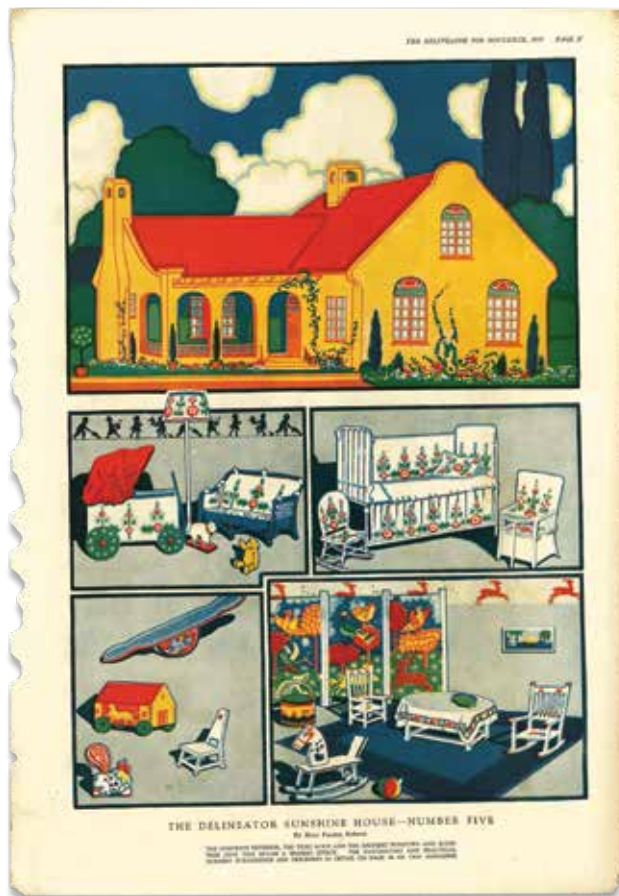


Figure 1. Page from a short-lived series of Sunshine Houses, featured in *The Delineator* magazine in 1919 to both entertain and offer suggestions to the modern housekeeper and mother. The interiors of these spaces represent many of the themes discussed here, including decorative design, furniture styles, children's objects, and landscaping. (Courtesy of the author)



Figure 2. "Dolly Dingle Makes a Cake and Pudding," Pictorial Review, New York, 1922. Grace G. Drayton here suggests fashionable clothes and fashionable hobbies for women and girls. Although rare, the inclusion of a visible household space - the kitchen - reminds viewers of Dolly's daily lifestyle. (Courtesy of the Strong Museum of Play, Rochester, New York)

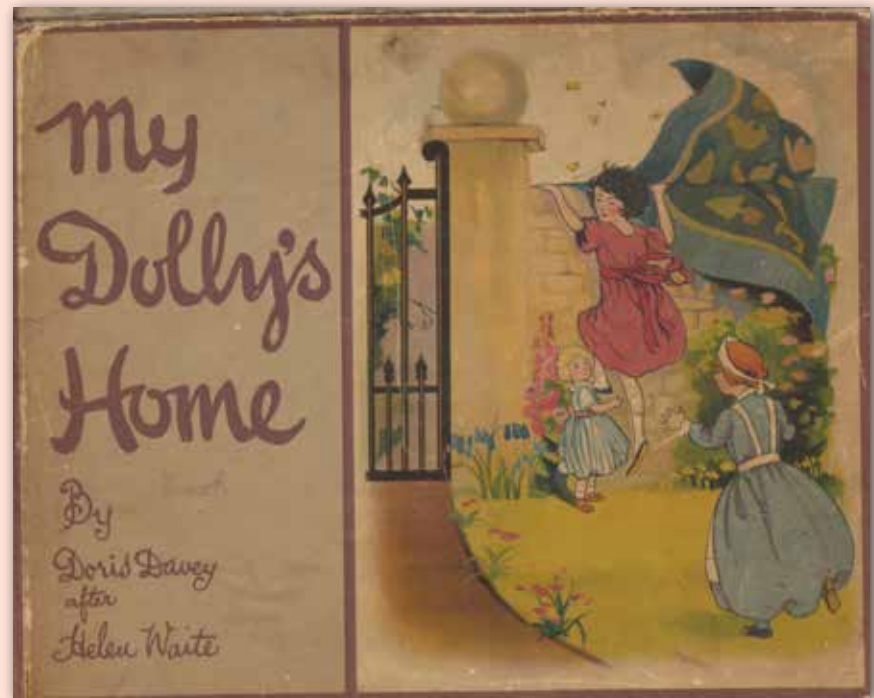


Figure 4. Front cover of My Dolly's Home, by Doris Davey after Helen Waite, Simpkin Marshall, Hamilton, Kent & Co. London, 1921. In this paper doll book with movable parts the house and grounds are extensive, offering a carriage house with a modern car, lovely landscaping, and a variety of interior spaces. Each room has openable doors and cabinets to add more detail. (Courtesy of the Winterthur Museum garden and Library)



Figure 3. Two-page spread from "Paper Dolls House," scrapbook by Emilie P. Hickey. ca.1870. glue, cut and painted paper cardboard. This scrapbook is an extensive project, including a variety of heavily decorated rooms. Underneath the wallpaper samples and textile scraps that make up the floor and wall coverings, there are the faint outlines of perspective lines, suggesting formal drawing training. Clearly artistic in nature, the maker includes references to classical art, illustration, and modern periodicals. (Courtesy of the Strong Museum of Play, Rochester, New York)

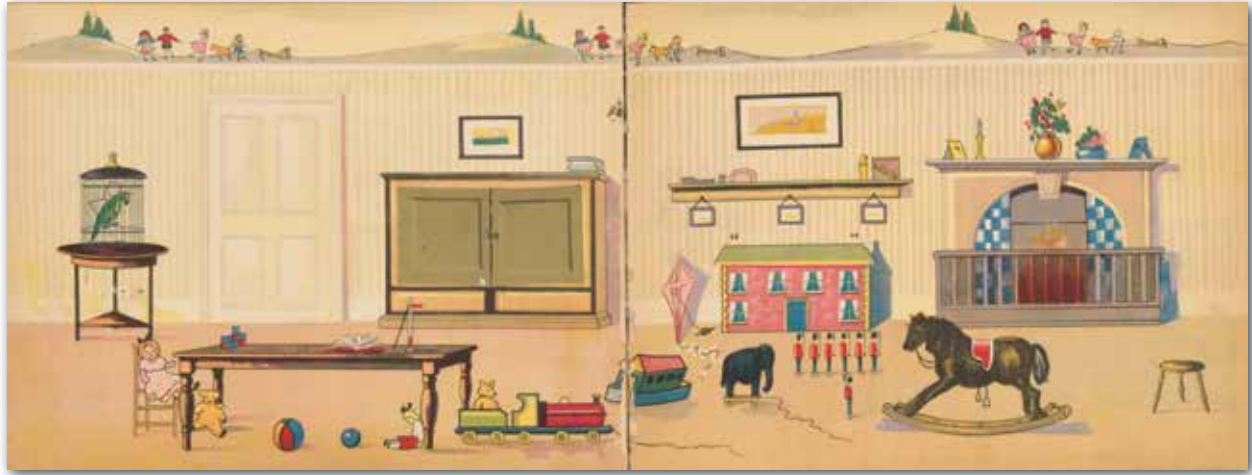


Figure 5. The playroom interior from the book described in figure 4. One of the cabinet doors sits slightly crooked on its paper hinge, a sign of wear and tear on the openable elements.

or Dolly Dingle serving as the child's proxy. They celebrated holidays, traveled to Europe and Asia, played with friends, and engaged in other daily activities. While the sheet behind the cut-out figure is typically blank, in some cases, the doll is placed in a setting, such as

the kitchen table in "Dolly Dingle Makes a Cake and Pudding," (Figure 2). These small glimpses into the living space of paper dolls suggest an environment without depicting an entire room.

Far more extensive than these small drawings, two-dimensional home designs for paper dolls include both homemade and mass-produced options. In many ways, the first popular version of a paper doll house was created on a scrapbook page. One intricate example is a page designed by Emilie P. Hickey, using wallpaper and fabric samples to furnish a room populated by paper people (Figure 3). Many of these scrapbooks were deeply imaginative, the juxtaposition of different source materials requiring meticulous design decisions by the child. Selecting source material from magazines, books, paper dolls, trade cards, and valentines, scrapbooks document popular and material culture. Unlike the mass-produced paper doll and its environment, the scrapbook "room" is a wholly creative endeavor. Scholars have characterized scrapbooks as political, philosophical, and academic creations wherein women or girls could articulate their personal beliefs, life experiences, and moral values. The makers of these scrapbook doll houses chose to feature certain spaces, outfitting them with carefully selected objects, materials, and images. While it is not possible to know the exact reasoning behind each item, the larger scrapbook tells its own story about the cultural, social, and political period of its creation.

Among the mass-produced and more didactic materials, 'glue books' offered children a storybook without



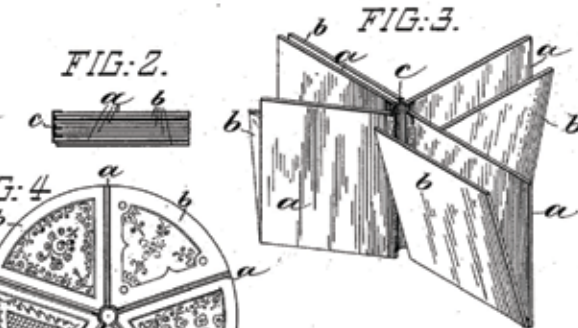
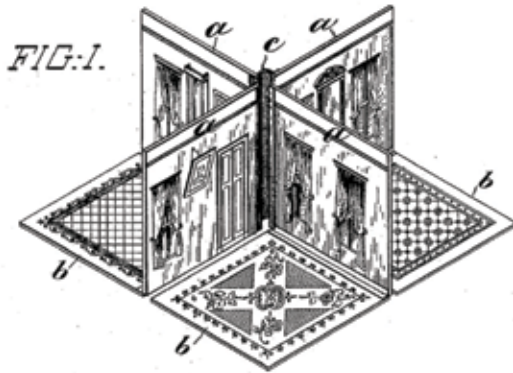
Figure 6. "New Folding Doll House," McLoughlin Bros., New York, c.1900. Chromolithographed paper and cardboard. This standing doll house became popular during the same period that paper dolls and paper doll houses rose to prominence. This space transitions from two to three dimensions, suggesting the ability to use paper dolls in the space, along with other types of playthings. (Courtesy of the Strong Museum of Play, Rochester, New York)

(No Model.)

E. McC. SMITH.  
TOY OR DOLL HOUSE.

No. 513,688.

Patented Jan. 30, 1894.



WITNESSES:

*J. W. Wilson*  
*John A. Cross*

INVENTOR:

*Eleanor McCulloch Smith*

By *Henry Bourne*  
Attorney.

THE NATIONAL LITHOGRAPHIC COMPANY,  
WASHINGTON, D. C.

Figure 7. Patent for Eleanor McCulloch Smith, of Baltimore, Maryland, Assignor to McLoughlin Brothers, of New York, N.Y. "Toy or Doll-House, Specification forming part of Letters Patent No513, 688, dated January 30, 1894." This patent for a paper doll house was later manufactured in the four-room model seen in the middle of the application. Much like figure 6, it folds flat for storage, but becomes three-dimensional for play, offering a three-dimensional home to its two-dimensional inhabitants.

the characters, instructing users to glue in people and furniture as a form of participatory storytelling.<sup>2</sup> While short-lived, these publications offered a form of collaborative play, where both the publisher and the consumer came together to form the home and its activities. There are other varieties of the didactic doll house book, where children were invited to move characters between the pages to transition spaces. The Winterthur Library holds *My Dolly's Home*, written by Doris Davey after Helen Waite, one version of this archetype (Figure 4). The family members, pre-cut

paper dolls, live in an envelope at the back of the book; they are not intended to be glued down, but rather moved through the rooms as the child plays. The arrangement of materials in these printed houses is meaningful, often suggesting prescribed pathways through the furnishings and materials in each part of the home. In the playroom, for instance (Figure 5), there are a variety of toys, a warm fire, and a playful parrot inviting an array of narrative choices. The cabinet doors open, revealing more toys, and the doorway opens into the previous room, creating a sense of continuity. It is easy to see the emphasis on child rearing, cooking, and entertaining in rooms like this playroom or the connected kitchens and sitting rooms. These are the spaces of the homemaker, the domain of women, who were expected to create and maintain the home. Through play, children were invited to practice both household management and design skills in miniature.

As these types of materials became increasingly popular, three-dimensional paper doll houses emerged on the market. Often made of stiff paper or decorated cardboard, spaces specifically meant for paper dolls began to resemble more traditional doll houses, with connected rooms, larger footprints, and exterior façades (Figure 6). Innovative technologies in both printing and toy production inspired new approaches, like the model described in the "Toy or Doll House" patent (Figure 7), filed by Eleanor McCulloch Smith on behalf of the McLoughlin Brothers toy company. While some of the houses were generic, toy companies did produce branded doll houses based on popular paper doll series. Sheila Young's *Lettie Lane* series, published in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century in *The Ladies' Home Journal*, offered a variety of paper and board houses designed for the dolls. The simplest three-dimensional version found in my research is *The Lettie Lane Paper Family* house (Figure 8). The house is

formed by a single printed front sheet and two side sheets that can be propped up along the bottom edge, producing a brownstone house façade with no interior spaces or rooms. It is less of a play space than a paper doll "holder," but it does create a three-dimensional element in the doll's two-dimensional world. Over time, the Lettie Lane house had an aesthetic evolution.

In December of 1912, *The Ladies' Home Journal* ran a subscription campaign featuring the Lettie Lane house, and including a small bisque doll based on the paper doll series. The house was advertised with exterior images as

*continued on page 16*

well as room-by-room pictorials and furniture suggestions (Figure 9). The toy's didactic intention is clear. At the top of the page, the magazine pitch is as follows: "It is Ready for Doll Housekeeping ... Its Little Mistress Welcomes You." If a child was an avid collector of Lettie Lane dolls, she would have seen Lettie wearing fashionable clothes, visiting relatives, engaging in recreational activities, and exemplifying the well-off lifestyle of white America in the early twentieth century. This house model fills out her story, providing a space to fully imagine Lettie's life of leisure at scale, complete with furniture, lavish decorations, and beautiful landscaping.

More than just a "doll house," paper doll world-building included every element deemed necessary to achieve an aspirational lifestyle, taught to mothers through magazine articles, and to daughters through their toys. One rare type of publication is the book dedicated to creating paper doll furniture at home. Both *Paper Furniture for Paper Dolls for the Amusement of Little Girls* (1857) and *Paper Doll's Furniture or How to Spend a Cheerful Rainy Day* (c.1900) are written from the perspective of a young woman teaching these skills to a younger sibling or ward.<sup>3</sup> The latter begins chapter one with an origin story, "This little work I have designed at the request of a sweet child, for whom ... I invented a set of toys out of paper." The author details how she helped a younger girl to create the items necessary for the home, passing along her knowledge through play. Each example provides stylized versions of furniture that can be traced, cut-out, and then folded from flat to create a three-dimensional object. Paper doll houses having made the shift from two- to three-dimensions, their furnishings now make the same dimensional shift. This type of foldable furniture was published in books, periodicals, and in pamphlets (Figure 10.)

Many different housekeeping skills are addressed in paper toys, including decoration, table setting, and festive holiday foodways. Illustrator and author Eleanor Colby composed a sheet of cut-outs for all the fine dishware, cutlery, and prepared foods needed to set a fashionable Christmas dinner for paper dolls. She provides instructions for being a "good housekeeper" by building a standing table out of a pasteboard box, making napkins from tissue paper, and transforming a box into a cupboard for storage.

If a child became invested enough in this process, she could quite easily create a lively paper household complete with family members, pets, toys, furniture, and purposeful rooms contained within a standing house. In her 2013 text *Little White Houses*, Diane Harris recalls playing with Betsy McCall paper dolls while her mother read *McCall's Magazine*. She observed that "American women and men who read their own magazines imported ideas from experts and from advertisers that created aspirations and expectations about taste, culture, appropriate living and the importance of consuming."<sup>4</sup> Despite the upper-class lifestyle espoused by these dolls, the periodical industry reached a broad socioeconomic

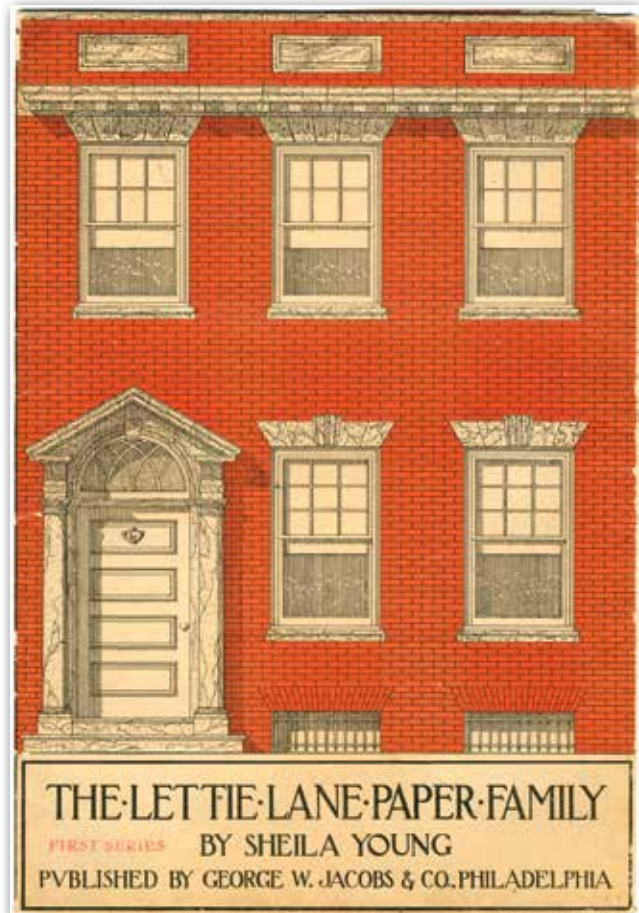


Figure 8. "The Lettie Lane Paper Family, First Series," by Sheila Young, George W. Jacobs & Co., Philadelphia, PA, 1909. This house front served to collect and hold paper dolls, while also offering a potential setting for the Lane family's many adventures. While this house is not mentioned explicitly in other written materials, it aligns with the lifestyle presented in the material objects, fashion, and hobbies of the fictional family. (Courtesy of the Strong Museum of Play, Rochester, New York)

range of households. Well before 1900, the United States had approximately 15,000 magazines in circulation, and women's magazines garnered hundreds of thousands of subscribers. While they often ran stories directed primarily at women in the upper- or upper-middle class, distributors also targeted lower income women in the form of aspirational readership. Paper toys followed the same pattern, offering the elements of an aspirational lifestyle to add into playtime.

Although it may appear paradoxical at first, it is critical to view these imaginary play-spaces as "real" - real within the enacted structure of society, real demonstrations of the emotional lineage of women's work, and real as representations of potential self-actualization. As much as paper dolls serve as a representation of period conceptions of race, gender, and socioeconomic class, paper doll houses reiterate many of these same themes by expanding the imaginative world in which they live. Both the magazines and their paper toys create a homogenous view of domestic life in the United States in the early twentieth century, a time and place notable for its increasing

diversity. Although the play is imaginary, these ideas represented real-world consequences. While children generated playtime scenarios with paper food on paper tables, they also began to imagine their own futures, building towards real spaces, places, and values through the twentieth century and beyond.

This text is based on a presentation originally given at the Ephemera 42 conference on March 17, 2022, as part of the Emerging Scholars Panel. One element of a larger thesis project on the social implications of twentieth century paper dolls, this work was generously supported by funds from the Winterthur Museum, Gardens, and Library in Wilmington, Delaware, and through a summer fellowship at the Rochester Museum of Play in Rochester, New York.



Figure 10. Cover to *Three Sets of Dolls Furniture*, G. W. Richardson & Co. 1884. This small pamphlet includes these traceable chairs and a mantel piece along with other pieces of furniture. Although limited in instructions, the drawings are meticulously labeled and positioned to enable easy construction. (Courtesy of the Strong Museum of Play, Rochester, New York)



Figure 9. Page featuring “Lettie Lane’s Doll House,” *The Ladies’ Home Journal*, December 1912. This article served dual purpose as an advertisement for a mail-in subscription campaign. Each room is detailed with specific furniture and landscaping details. The series of paper dolls became so popular that the magazine itself began to use the branding to drive subscription purchasing. (Courtesy of the Strong Museum of Play, Rochester, New York)

### End Notes:

The Frederick Stokes quote can be found in *A Publishers Random Notes, 1880-1935*, published in 1935 by the New York Public Library.

For more information about glue books, see Christie D. Jackson’s “From the Collection: With Paper and Glue: Building the Commercial Success of an Arts and Crafts Toy,” *Winterthur Portfolio*, vol. 44, no. 4, 2010.

Both *Paper Furniture for Paper Dolls for the Amusement of Little Girls* (1857), and *Paper Doll’s Furniture or How to Spend a Cheerful Rainy Day* (c. 1900) can be found at the Winterthur Library along with several other examples.

*Little White Houses: How the Postwar Home Constructed Race in America*, written by Diane Harris, University of Minnesota, 2013.

**Rachael Kane**, Curator of Education and Interpretation at the Currier Museum of Art, is a 2022 graduate from the Winterthur Program in American Material Culture. Her thesis work on the representational



politics of early twentieth century American paper dolls grew out of a research interest in the study of illustrated toys and games. After graduating from Hamilton College with a concentration in anthropology and the Japanese language, Rachael worked for several New England regional art museums with a focus on institutional equality, especially in relation to race and gender. Drawing on her own hybrid background as educator, artist, and anthropologist, Rachael continues to advocate for the use of material culture to help re-examine the historical record.

# The Lincoln Highway Centennial: *Performing along one of America's Early Transcontinental Roads*

BY CECE OTTO

My creation of themed historic music programs began with “The Lincoln Highway,” specifically with an April 2013 New York City show, the beginning of a 3,300-plus mile singing travelogue that grew to 30 performances in 14 states by September. I lived on the road, collecting both vintage and modern ephemera, as well as stories to share.

The Lincoln Highway is part of the often overlooked auto trails that pre-date our modern numbered highway system. At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the automobile was not yet ubiquitous in the United States. While the Good Roads Movement begun in the 1870s had started to make some progress by the early 1900s, decent drivable roads were practically nonexistent outside of major cities and towns. Indy 500 founder Carl Fisher had the dream to build a coast-to-coast highway, but he needed backing from people within the automotive industry. In the end Henry Joy, president of the Packard Motor Company, and Frank Seiberling, president of Goodyear, supported Fisher’s idea and the Lincoln Highway Association was founded on July 1, 1913. Running from New York City to San Francisco through over a dozen states, this highway would be the first national memorial to President Lincoln, pre-dating the Lincoln Memorial in Washington DC by nine years.

Within a couple of years, motorists wanted to travel the Lincoln Highway across the country, but without proper directions or signage, people wouldn’t get very far. To help motorists, the association published the first Lincoln Highway guidebook in 1915. It provided directions, mileage between cities, gas station stops, speed limits, number of hotel rooms, what food to pack, what to wear, and more. It sold out quickly, and was updated and re-published in 1916. This book is still often referenced by road historians, and it served as inspiration for some of my Lincoln Highway concert programs (I sang excerpts).

To coincide with the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the road in 2013, I planned to follow the 1913 route as closely as I could and give at least one concert in every state along the route. While I had found some

Figure 1. “Let Me Stray” Souvenir Sheet Music: From the Capitol Theatre, Grand Island, Nebraska, 1929.

songs that mentioned the highway, I wanted to find out what types of songs were historically performed along the route during its heyday. I contacted several state archives, asking if they had any concert programs or sheet music from Lincoln Highway communities dating between 1913 and 1935. My two favorite pieces from this part of the research that I incorporated into the concert tour are shown in Figures 1 and 2. I imagined “Let Me Stray” being sung in a new “talkie” movie of 1929 with the organist getting the audience to sing along between showings! I performed this song at every stop along the tour (including in Grand Island, Nebraska itself), and since I found no recordings, I included it in my Lincoln Highway album. I also recorded “Out Where the West Begins,” a song performed in a 1931 Cheyenne, Wyoming concert. I had never



Figure 2. "Setting the West to Music"  
Concert Program, Cheyenne, Wyoming, 1931.

heard of composer Estelle Philleo until I saw her name in the program, not surprising for a woman composer of this era.

A Kickstarter campaign in the winter of 2013 raised enough money to make the concerts free to the public. I created a versatile concert program that the audience could follow and that would also serve as a keepsake after the show. A photograph of me taken along the highway, was treated with graphics filters to achieve a vintage poster effect for the cover (see Figure 6).

I collected photographs and ephemera from all the places I traveled over the six

months. I also gathered various flyers and programs from my concerts. Driving from New York City westward, here are some of the highlights. (Figure 3) When I performed and stayed at the General Warren Inn in Malvern, Pennsylvania just outside of Philadelphia, the hotel manager gave me a copy of a vintage brochure he had found. It included a map and a sample menu of what the restaurant served at the time - a snapshot of an earlier era of travel.

Also in western Pennsylvania, the Lincoln Highway Heritage Corridor teamed with local schools to create works of roadside art in various media, including old gas pumps (my favorite of these was the "Vincent Van Gas" pump, painted in the style of Vincent Van Gogh.) (Figure 4)

The 1930s Lincoln Motor Court in Manns Choice, Pennsylvania is a proper motor court featuring cottages with original vintage interiors and fixtures. You can park your car right in front of your own little porch! (Figure 5)

SAMPLE MENU  
\$1.50 DINNER

CELERY OLIVES  
DOUBLE CHICKEN BROTH

CHOICE OF  
ONE HALF SPRING CHICKEN  
SIRLOIN STEAK  
ROAST LONG ISLAND DUCKLING

FRESH VEGETABLES IN SEASON  
POTATOES ANY STYLE  
LETTUCE AND TOMATO SALAD  
HOME BAKED PIE  
ICE CREAM OR CAKE  
COFFEE

*A la carte Service*  
Lobsters, Steaks, Mushrooms, etc.

HOW TO GET TO GENERAL WARREN INN

At Green Tree, beyond Paoli, be sure to turn right under railroad bridge, following Lincoln Highway to the Inn at the foot of the hill beyond Malvern.

VISIT  
THE  
HISTORICAL

GENERAL  
WARREN  
INN

Just beyond MALVERN, PA.  
on the Lincoln Highway  
Open every Day and Night  
Finest Quality Foods  
Large Cheerful Rooms  
Fair Prices  
A delightful Motor ride—  
Good roads from everywhere

HENRY HENNING, Proprietor  
Telephone Malvern 170

Figure 3. Photocopy of an undated brochure from the General Warren Inn, Malvern PA.

continued on page 20



Figure 4. Photograph of an art installation of old gas pumps, Lincoln Highway Corridor, Western PA (author photograph)

In South Bend, Indiana, while I performed at a music school, a little girl named Zoe was quietly coloring. After the program she came up to me with her mother, and proudly handed me her creation, which I happily accepted. (Figure 6)

People often ask me if Route 66 and the Lincoln Highway meet someplace, and they do! Depending on which route you take (there were a couple of alignments), you'll find that spot in either Joliet or Plainfield, Illinois, where I photographed the dual signage of these two iconic roads. In Iowa the excellent road signage continued, and I saw beautifully preserved bridges and buildings. In Boone County, a wonderful barn is covered in street signs created and curated by local artist and collector, Lincoln Highway Johnny.

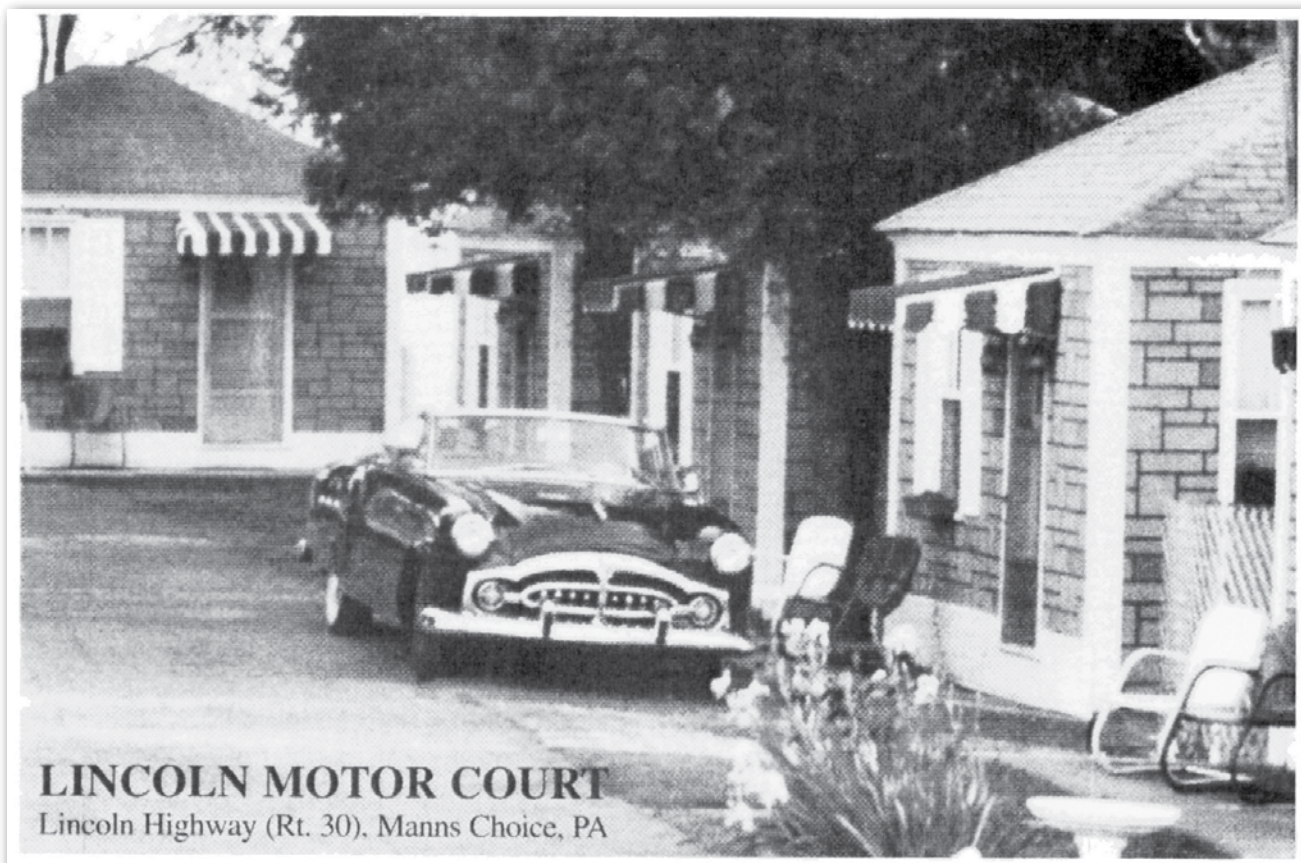


Figure 5. Reproduction of a 1950s postcard. "Lincoln Motor Court: Built in the 1930's, this is the only motor court still in operation in Bedford County for overnight guests ... 5104 Lincoln Highway, Manns Choice, PA."



Figure 6. Zoe's art work on the cover of "An American Songline" program, performance in South Bend IN.

The halfway point for the route is in Kearney, Nebraska, where I was honored to be part of the centennial celebrations (Figure 7 is a "save the date" postcard). At the modern Lincoln Highway Association annual conference, I was given as a souvenir this article of ephemera from 1940 (Figure 8).

A postcard from North Platte Nebraska publicizes my July 4<sup>th</sup> concert at the Fort Cody Trading Post (Figure 9). Note the early use of a QR code.

In Grantsville, Utah, a flyer was handed out with my concert programs (Figure 10). Included is a regional map showing the different alignments of the route over time, and an excerpt of the packing list from the 1916 guidebook.

I loved the route in Pennsylvania, but along the Lincoln Highway in Nevada I truly felt as if I were experiencing what weary travelers saw a century ago. A private tour of the 1879 Eureka Sentinel Newspaper Building (the newspaper folded in 1960) revealed the press room with the original equipment, and posters hanging on the walls.

My final formal concert was in Livermore, California at the Duarte Garage and Lincoln Highway Museum. I performed to a packed house, and witnessed the dedication of an original Lincoln



Figure 7. Postcard for the Lincoln Highway Centennial, Kearney NE.



Figure 8. Bank check written December 10, 1940 in Shelton NE and cashed December 19 in Detroit. Signed by W.G. Amos, it appears to pay for his dues in the National Automobile Dealers association.

Highway marker. One of the organizers recorded audio of the concert, and he captured my emotional farewell:

*“It has been an absolute, absolute amazing experience, both good and not so good. (laughs) It has been phenomenal to meet everybody in the Lincoln Highway communities from coast to coast, and they’re all the same. I wish people — sorry, I feel like I’m Miss America all of a sudden, jeez — I wish people would not think about what divides us in this country. I wish they would think about what unites us. And I, in six months, saw a lot more that united us versus divided us. It really is the truth. I hope that you take that away wherever you go to next, wherever you travel to next. You all need food in your belly. You all love your children. And you all need a place to sleep. That’s the bottom line. And we’re all hungry for adventure in one way or another.”*

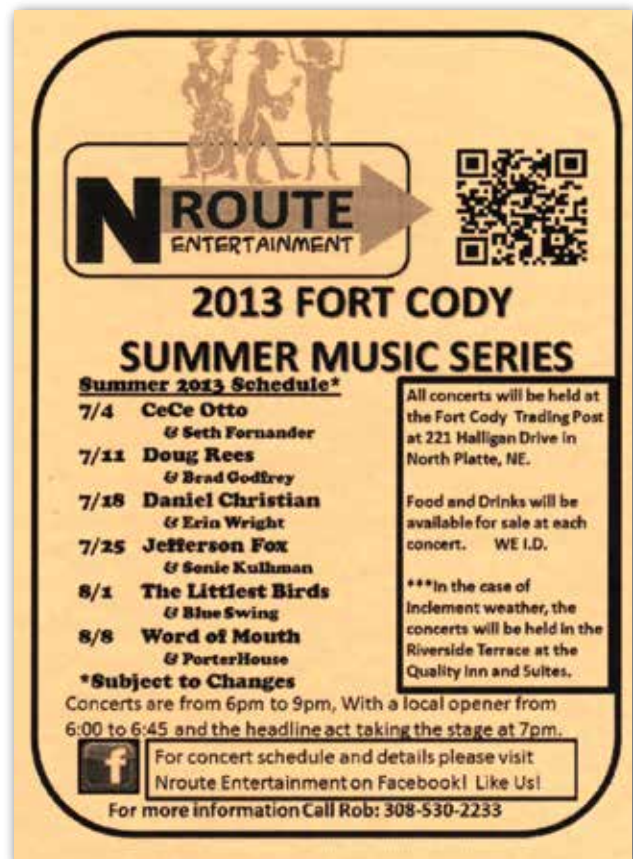


Figure 9. Postcard for the summer music series at Fort Cody, North Platte NE.

## Facts about the Lincoln Highway

The Lincoln Highway was initially funded by private donations from people like Theodore Roosevelt, Thomas Edison and Woodrow Wilson.



Grantsville resident, James Wrathall, gave \$2464.28 for the road construction between Timpie and Wendover. Grantsville City also contributed \$2000.

On October 31, 1913 in the Grantsville Opera House, Grantsville residents joined the rest of the nation in a celebration of the opening of the Lincoln Highway.

The original 1913 route of the Lincoln Highway came westward through Grantsville on Main Street, north on Center Street, west on Clark Street and then northwest on Old Lincoln Highway. In Skull Valley, it passed through Iosepa.

In 1919, the route changed and went through Tooele and Rush Valley, across Johnson's Pass (renamed "Fisher's Pass") and across the desert.

The 1916 *Complete Official Road Guide of the Lincoln Highway* says you should expect to pay no more than \$5.00 per day per passenger, for gas, food, board, and everything except for tires.

Some items to pack: (Select items from a list in the 1916 guide)

- |                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| --3 bars Ivory soap | --5 gal. milk can (for water west of Cheyenne, WY) |
| --frying pan        | --Knives, forks, spoons                            |
| --stew pots         | --Yellow goggles, white goggles                    |
| --10 lbs. potatoes  | --slab of bacon                                    |
| --3 cans oil        | --4 loaves bread                                   |
| --3 spark plugs     | --grate for campfire                               |
| --axe and shovel    |  |
| --1 can tooth paste |  |

## Lincoln Highway 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

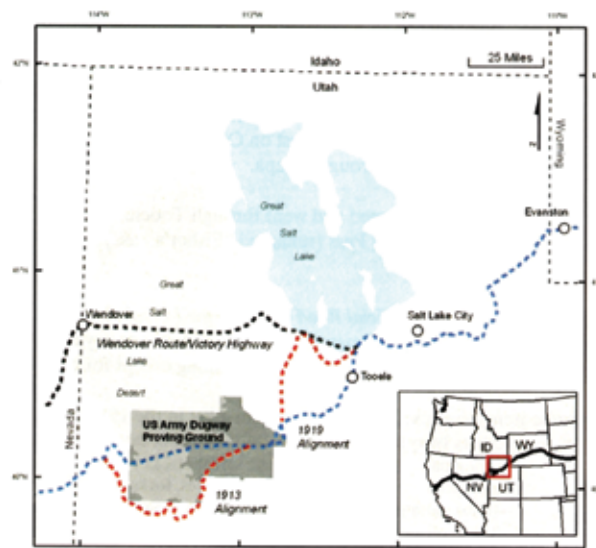
At

**J. Reuben Clark Historic Farm**

*(an original on the 1913 Lincoln Highway)*

**August 15, 2013**

**Starring Cecelia Otto, singer  
Accompanied by Dan Butcher**



Routes of the Lincoln Highway in Utah.

Figure 10. Flyer distributed at the Grantsville UT concert.

I've revisited portions of the route in the decade since. Some of the places have closed, some people I met are now gone, but the road itself endures. More and more people are embracing the "slow travel" movement and taking those historic roads and backroads, and I couldn't be more pleased that the legacy of this historic road lives on.

When I was on the road people would ask me where I was from, and I'd say, "the Lincoln Highway." They'd laugh and say, "No really, where are you from?" But in truth, that's where I felt my home was at the time. Towards the end of the trip, I could feel when I was driving on the original highway, and I didn't need a GPS or a map to guide me. Others who have driven the road cross-country have had a similar experience, and we all talk about how the Lincoln Highway beckons us to come back and drive it again no matter how many times we've driven it. Thank you for taking this mini-ephemera trip with me, and I hope to meet you out on the road someday soon!

### Cecelia "Cece" Otto

is a classically trained singer, composer, international best-selling author and historian who has performed in venues all over the world both as a soloist and in ensemble. After completing her Lincoln Highway adventure, she created other historical programs such as The Songs of World War I and Centennial of Suffrage and is debuting a new concert program about Prohibition. She lives in Portland, Oregon, and has written books and recorded albums based on her research.



# European Date Labels: *An Introduction*

By DENNIS V. JOHNSON AND JANE C. MACKNIGHT

Date fruit consumption was introduced into present-day Europe during the Roman Empire (27 BCE – 476 CE) when, in addition to southern Europe, the Empire controlled provinces in North Africa and Mesopotamia (centered on present-day Iraq). Pliny the Elder, writing in 77 CE, described growing the date palm and extolled the sweetness of its fruits.<sup>1</sup> The Romans were fond of dates and evidence from archaeobotany supports date consumption during the Middle Ages in Europe,<sup>2</sup> the fruit originating from elsewhere in the Empire.<sup>3</sup>

The date's long culinary history in Europe is related to its qualities as an excellent sweet and sweetener, a commodity that ships and stores well, can be eaten out of hand and serves as an ingredient in sweet and savory dishes. For millennia after its introduction, dates were an expensive luxury food in Europe<sup>4,5</sup>.

Pliny noted that date palms were grown in Italy and coastal Spain during the first century CE., but the fruits did not fully mature on the tree because of the climate. The Moorish conquest of Iberia in the 7<sup>th</sup> century led to other attempts at date growing, such as the date grove in Elche, Spain. Modest date fruit production ensued, but the fruits had to be picked when immature and cured to make them edible. The Elche Palmeral still produces dates, preserved today as a World Heritage site.<sup>6</sup> A palm grove was also established during the Middle Ages at Bordighera on the Italian Riviera but devoted exclusively to the production of leaves for Roman Catholic religious festivals. This ancient palm grove continues to be maintained as a source of leaves for Palm Sunday observance.<sup>7</sup> Although commercial date growing in Europe never succeeded, the palms are popular in gardens and as roadside plantings along the Mediterranean shore.

Initially, European date fruits were imported in bulk, the fruits pressed into blocks and wrapped in date palm leaves and then stuffed into wooden crates. For retail sale, the desired quantity of dates was cut from the block. In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century a confluence of events affected date imports into Europe. French, British and Italian colonization in North Africa and the Middle East enhanced trade from the colonies, which were already the source of dates. Expansion of European retail markets induced the import of loose and more attractive individual date



Figure 1. Yasmina brand. Deglet Nour variety, origin Tunisia. Packed in Djerid, a region of southwestern Tunisia.

fruits of high-quality varieties. Initially, individual dates were imported and packaged in Europe mostly through the port of Marseille; later individual packaging was done in the producing country such as Algeria and Tunisia. The concurrent development of chromolithography allowed the printing of attractive

color labels which were added to the packages in Europe. Retailers competed to create the most attractive labels for their brands, a competition which continues to this day. Packages typically contain about one-half pound of fruit and measure 4 3/8 x 8 5/8 inches. The collectable labels are the subject of this article.

European date palm labels tell an interesting but incomplete story. Highly colorful and artistically designed, frequent depictions include desert oases with date palms and fruits, camels and people engaged in some aspect of date culture and harvest in the Arab world. The designs evoke the orientalist movement of late 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe. The lack of a printing date limits chronological analysis.

Typical labels include the following information: brand name, contents, country of origin, fruit variety, weight and importer with location; the language of the text indicates the intended domestic market.

Without publications specific to date palm labels, photographs found on the internet were the chief source of information. Over 100 images were examined. Among the labels offered for sale, representative types were purchased to illustrate this article. Figures 1-9 demonstrate the colorful and various designs.

Collectively, the labels verify imports from Algeria, Tunisia and Iraq. Texts are in English, French, Italian, German and Arabic. Delget Nour is the principal variety imported, along with Zahidi and Kenta. Although the Medjool variety is documented to be a longstanding import from Morocco, no labels of this particular variety were found. Other dates of unidentified variety reached Europe from Egypt and Syria as well. Figures 3 and 4 appear to be the oldest labels and, perhaps, the most aesthetically appealing. “Muscade” is a common designation. Originally a French term for “second quality,” the meaning may now include first quality fruits.

The labels illustrated here were typical of European date sales. Affixed paper labels from the larger fruit containers, content information imprinted directly on the wooden container exterior, or stenciled content on date tins could expand our knowledge of the date trade and its graphic output. Today, paper and plastic packaging carry forward the tradition of colorful advertisement of dates.

### End Notes

1. Pliny the Elder. 1855. *The Natural History*. John Bostock (tr.). Taylor and Francis, London. Book 13, chapter 6.
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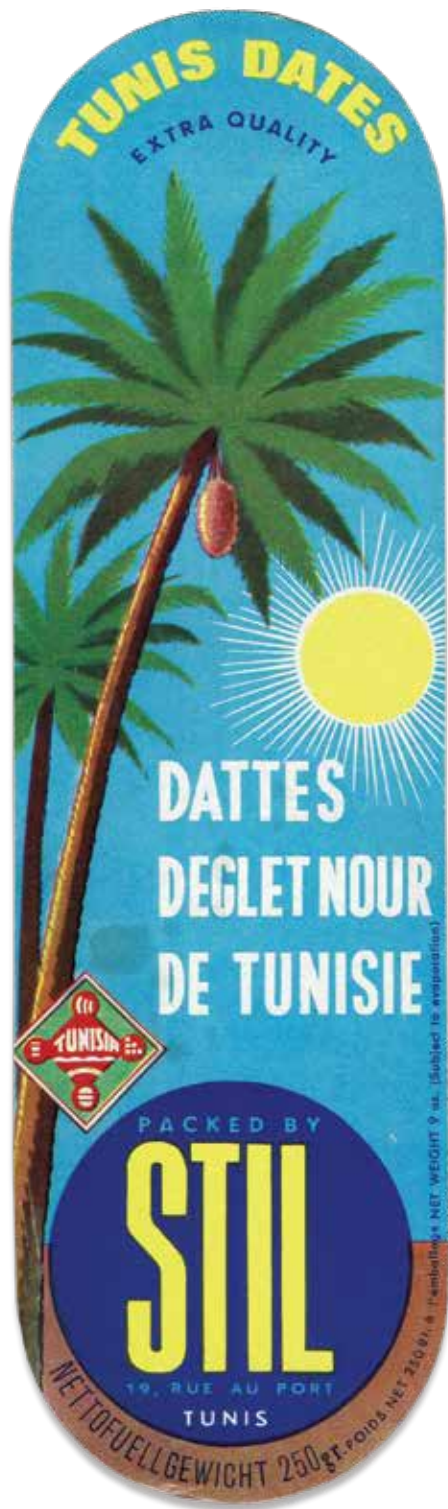


Figure 2. STIL brand. Deglet Nour variety, origin Tunisia. Packed in Tunis.



Figure 3. CS brand. Variety and country of origin not indicated. Packed in Marseille.

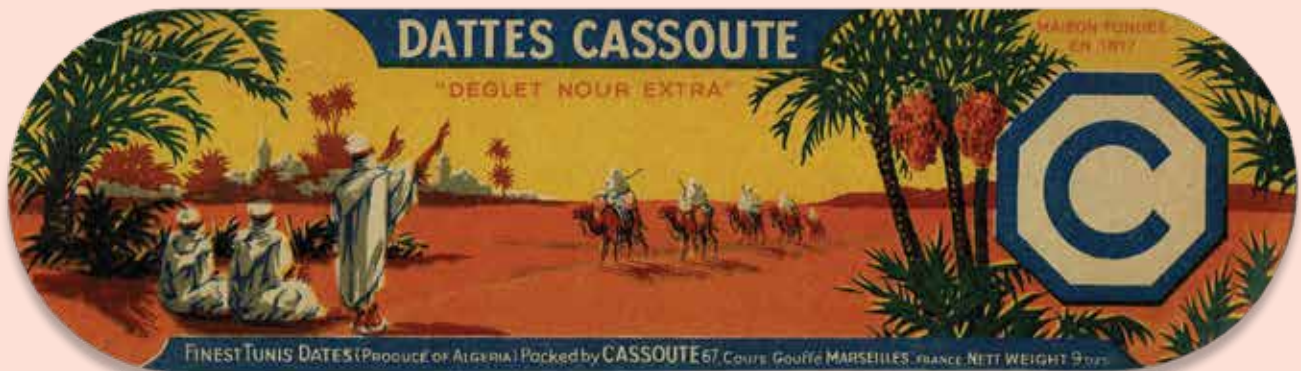


Figure 4. Cassoute brand. Deglet Nour variety, origin Algeria. Packed in Marseille.



Figure 5. Vincenzo Raimondo brand. Deglet Nour variety, origin Tunisia. Packed in Italy.



Figure 6. Blue Star brand. Zahidi (Zahid) variety, origin Iraq. Packed in Marseille.

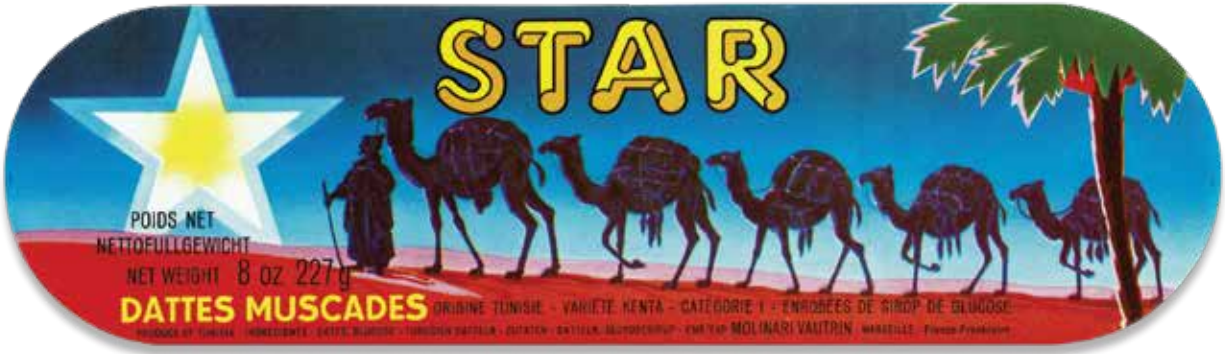


Figure 7. STAR brand. Kenta variety, origin Tunisia. Packed in Marseille.



Figure 8. Eagle brand. Deglet Nour variety, origin Algeria. Packed in Marseille.

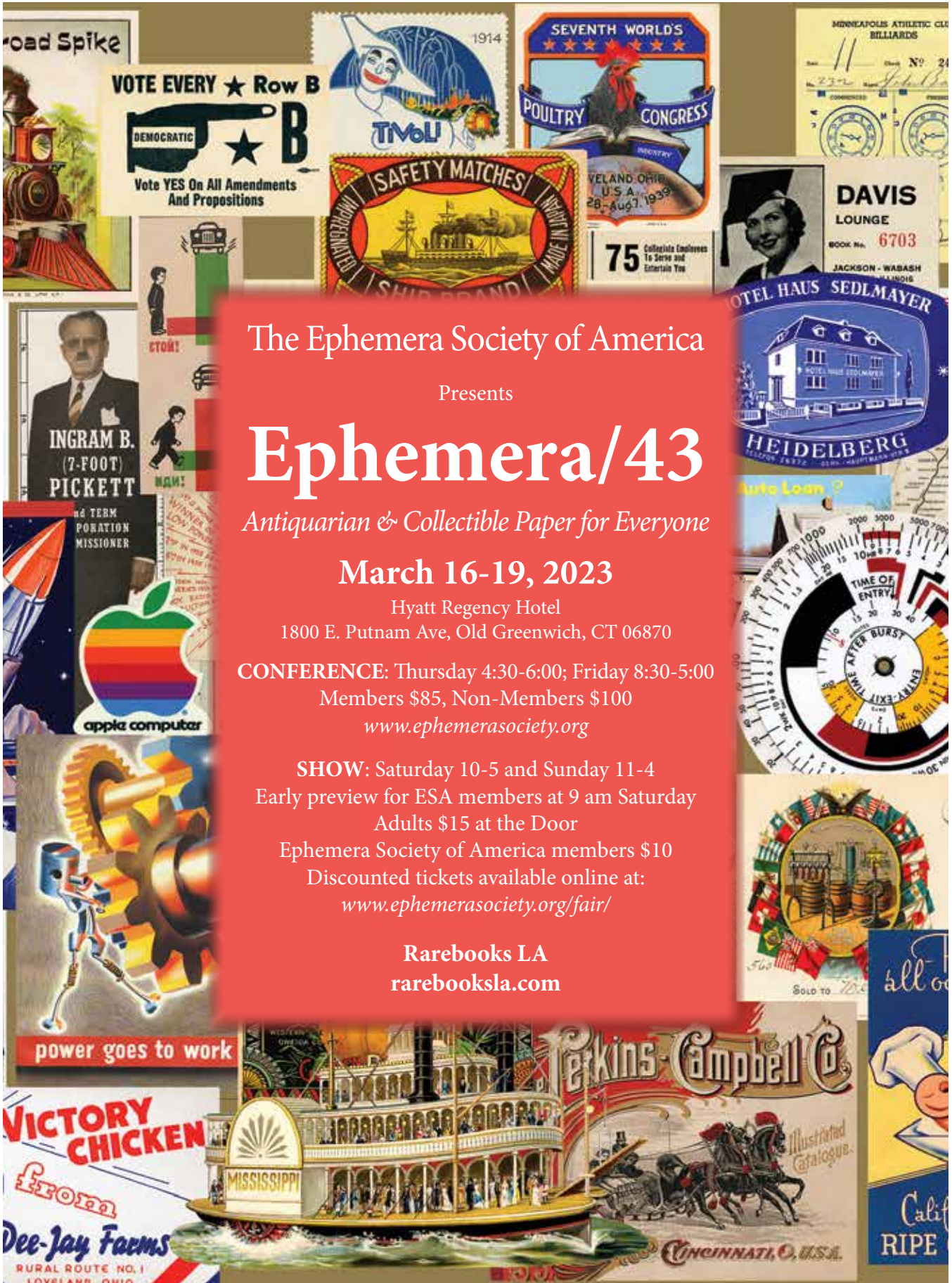


Figure 9. BF brand. Deglet Nour variety, origin Tunisia. Packed in Beni Khalled, Tunisia.

3. Livarda A. 2011. "Spicing up life in northwestern Europe: exotic food plant imports in the Roman and Medieval world." *Vegetation History and Archaeobotany* 20(2):143-164.
4. Moncorgé M.J. Fruit in Medieval Europe. <https://www.oldcook.com/en/medieval-fruit>
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In retirement, **Dennis Johnson**, a geographer and international consultant on agriculture and forestry, and **Jane MacKnight**, a biologist and museum registrar, collaborate on research and writing about date palms to satisfy their curiosity and provide unusual travel destinations.



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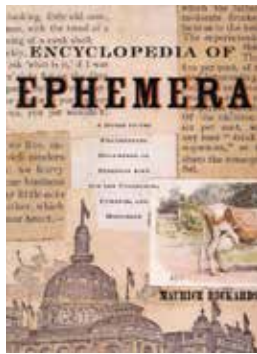
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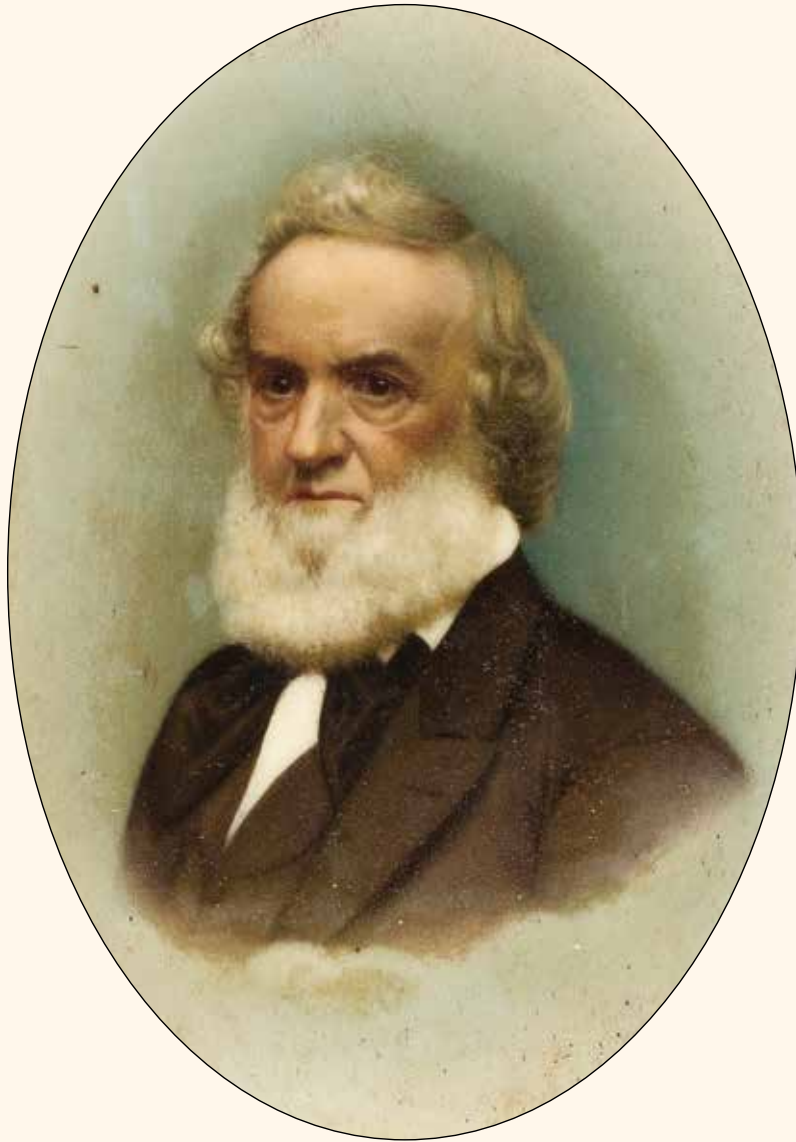
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