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Black Baseball Barnstorming

BY MICHAEL PEICH

Travel has always been central to American sports. One of the most fertile periods occurred between 1886 and 1947, when Jim Crow America closed the door on Black professional baseball players, forcing them to travel extensively if they wished to make a living playing baseball. Like the original theatrical barnstormers who took to the road and performed in rural barns, Black barnstorming baseball teams crisscrossed America performing wherever they could find games, entertaining fans with a mix of spectacular athleticism and comic high jinks. This six-decade period of Black baseball is defined by the determination of Black players who refused to allow racism to keep them from the game they loved.

America was smitten with baseball after the Civil War, and every city and town had a local Nine. Baseball's popularity was enhanced by a rapidly growing railroad system that enabled teams to travel with ease. The national press provided daily news and scores. Manufacturers used baseball images on trade cards, and tobacco companies issued collectible player cards. America was awash in baseball. (Figure 1)

The early game was not entirely racially restricted. Several Black pioneers—Bud Fowler, Moses Fleetwood Walker, Bud Grant, Frank Stovey and others—played on white professional teams in the 1870s, '80s and '90s. But playing professionally was only possible for a handful of Black players once Jim Crow laws formally established segregation and reinforced racial prejudice. Black players were frequently subjected to verbal taunts, bad calls by umpires, hard slides, and physical abuse by errant pitches. (Figure 2)

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Figure 1a: Cigar box label, Roby Bros. Co., Belmont OH. The small cigar company operated 1900 to 1943. [The John and Carolyn Grossman Collection, Winterthur Museum]

Figure 1b: Cigarette card, featuring 2nd baseman Fred Pfeffer of Chicago 1887, one of perhaps 500 cards 1887-1890 included in cigarette packs of Old Judge, copyright Goodwin & co., New York NY.

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Members and Friends

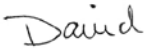
A new season of Ephemera Fairs began with Papermania (I attended eagerly with checkbook in hand). The fall Brimfield extravaganza is also upon us (September 5-10).

The next show I will be attending will be the Allentown fair in October 7 and 8, which just happens to be near the location for the Ephemera Society's mid-year meeting. The Board of Directors meet on Thursday October 5; the next day all members are welcome to tour the Winterthur museum, library, and gardens with us. I hear they have a fabulous collection of tea-related material, just my cup of tea! If you wish to join the tour, contact Mary Beth Malmsheimer (*info@ ephemerasociety.com* with "Winterthur" in the subject line) as there are limited spaces available, and the time has not yet been established. Early Saturday, the focus is on Allentown, where many of our dealer members will be set up as vendors. This show is one of my favorite ones to attend not only for the opportunity to buy great ephemera, but also for the Farmers' Market in the hall opposite the display venue.

The ESA continues to grow. Elizabeth Svendsen has set up an Ephemera Forum page on Facebook. I encourage everyone to sign in and participate (*www.facebook.com/groups/1434990543968097/*). Thank you, Elizabeth!

We are discussing setting up a research fellowship for young scholars with the Clements Library at the University of Michigan. This is only in the initial stage, but they are receptive to working with us on this program. More to follow as we get further into the process.

On a very somber note, I regret to inform you of the passing of ESA member Jonathan Mann who was at our March conference/show with Harry Newman of The Old Print Shop. Jonathan was walking over the Manhattan Bridge when an individual attacked him with a brick. After a week in Bellevue Hospital and after numerous operations, he was released into the care of an ESA colleague where he died two days later.



David Lilburne, President

Save the Dates!

Ephemera 44
2024 Annual
Conference & Fair
March 15-17, 2024
Old Greenwich CT

Conflict/Resolution examined through Ephemera

Ephemera 44, our 2024 annual conference, will look at the ephemera of social or military conflict and — where possible — its resolution. We are planning for presentations based on tangible ephemera — such as recruitment and protest posters, broadsides, letters, postcards, Civil War covers, handbills, propaganda and disinformation, material relating to the draft, maps, stamps, battle-plan drawings, scrapbooks, flag and uniform trade catalogs, ephemera relating to restoration programs, monuments, and war cemeteries, proclamations, satirical prints, editorial cartoons, underground publications, etc. The talk might look at ephemera intentionally created to support a position, documentation that supports the prosecution of the conflict, or symbols developed to promote a cause or identity, such as the raised fist, the peace sign, or Rosie the Riveter.

Two Great October Events

Mid-Year Gathering at Winterthur, October 6

This year's ESA Mid-Year Gathering will take place Friday, October 6, at Winterthur Museum, Garden, and Library near Wilmington DE. ESA Vice President Mike Peich has arranged a day of delights: We'll examine the Library's extensive ephemera collection (including the John and Carolyn Grossman collection, one of the most comprehensive archives of Victorian and Edwardian graphic ephemera anywhere); tour the conservation laboratory; and enjoy the vast gardens and the mansion, home to the most significant collection of American decorative arts in the world. In the evening, Henry Voigt will welcome attendees to his home to see his world-class menu collection. (Following this Friday of exceptional ephemera, you may choose to spend your weekend at the Allentown Paper Show, a 90-minute drive away.) Spaces are limited, so register soon by contacting Mary Beth Malmsheimer at *info@ephemerasociety.org*.

Virtual Mini-Conference & Fair, October 20-22

It's another ESA online event! We'll have an afternoon of lectures on Friday, October 20, followed by a virtual fair Friday evening through Sunday. Of course, ESA members will be given exclusive early access to the Fair. Many more details — topics, speakers, how to register — are coming, but be sure to mark your calendar now!

In this Issue...

Vice-President **Mike Peich's** baseball article that leads this issue is based on an enthusiastic (and broader-ranging) presentation at our March conference. His significant baseball collection is inspired by love of the game, and this piece focuses on his exploration of the indignities of both exclusion and caricature suffered by baseball 'greats' who were Black.

Hannah Swan also presented at our conference, but here she introduces us to her love (and cultural analysis) of party planning literature - which led to the winning of a prestigious collecting prize. Her article includes her enthusiasm for 'activating' her collection by staging parties described in instructional books. Visually, her collection showcases a mid-20th century aesthetic.

The last two articles focus on specific kinds of ephemera and the desire to understand how they were created. **David Kaminski's** serious study of handwriting led to a curiosity about early printing with stencils and how examples can be differentiated from ephemera produced with movable type.

Jeremy Rowe's discovery of three real-photo postcards with titles included in the negative led him to more thoroughly explore the introduction by Kodak of a particular camera.

As with all serious ephemerists, these four authors have invested in ways to share their collections. Mike Peich has a web site showcasing his collection of early Southern baseball cards *t209-contentnea.com*.

Hannah Swan showcases her collection through Instagram *@EphemeraParty* (and, the next time you are in Madison, you might get invited to one of her parties!)

davidkaminski.org includes a huge annotated listing of manuscript ephemera from 1661 to 2014.

And Jeremy's web site, *vintagephoto.com* is rich with both information and images of his wide-ranging collection.

—Diane DeBlois, editor

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Figure 2a: Cabinet card photograph by Philip S. Ryder of the 1888 Syracuse Stars, Moses Fleetwood Walker top left. [Unless otherwise indicated all images are in the public domain]

When I was barnstorming with the Kansas City, Kansas, Giants, we got around any way we could … Well, now, we tried to book games all along the railroads. But sometimes, here off twenty-five or thirty miles, was a little town with a team that had a tremendous following, and we would make that town … by any transportation we could get. Sometimes we'd have delivery rigs; other times we'd have a hay wagon or just a plain dray with boards across it to sit on.

The Cuban Giants were the first professional Black traveling team, organized in 1885 by Frank B. Thompson, head waiter at the Argyle Hotel in Babylon, Long Island. Thompson staged baseball games played by the hotel's waitstaff for the Argyle's guests. Thompson's squad and other groups made baseball presented by Black players into a popular hotel entertainment during the early 1880s. The games allowed white guests to enjoy America's favorite sport, while reinforcing the stereotype of Black baseball as a novelty. (Figure 3)

The Argyle's games grew in popularity over the summer of 1885, with Thompson moving his Philadelphia team, the Keystone Athletics, to play at the Babylon hotel. By

Some white players and owners who wished to exclude Blacks from their game, like the Chicago White Stockings' future Hall of Famer Adrian "Cap" Anson, refused to play teams that had players of color. Anson's public crusade against Black players was widely embraced, and though no formal rule or announcement was made, Black players were quietly excluded from white teams by a silent consensus that became known as the "Gentleman's Agreement." Black participation was further discouraged by the 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* Supreme Court decision, which established racial segregation as legal under the "separate but equal" doctrine. Blacks were free to play professional baseball, but not on white teams. By 1900, they were fully excluded from the white professional leagues.

Forced to rethink the business of established white baseball, Black players, managers, promoters, and owners concluded that a future for Black baseball could be built on two principles: entertainment and travel. A baseball game was a form of entertainment, and Black baseball was known for offering amusement that went beyond a typical game. But travel for Black baseball teams was a grueling challenge in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Teams had to ride in segregated train cars, stay in segregated hotels (when they could find lodging at all) and eat in segregated restaurants. Arthur Hardy, who pitched for numerous barnstorming teams, recalled in 1911 the difficulty of playing a game he loved:

Figure 2b: Old Judge cigarette cabinet card 1888-89 featuring Hall of Fame infielder/catcher Adrian "Cap" Anson.

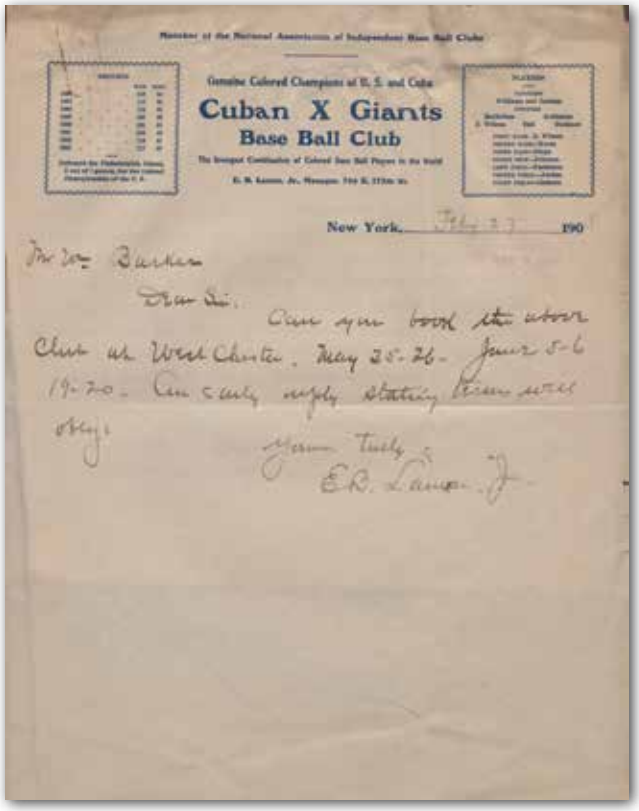
Figure 3a: Unmounted studio photograph of the 1886 Cuban Giants.

summer's end, he had formed a Black touring club, the Babylon Boys, who traveled by train and played prominent white and Black teams in the South. The team played their own version of "Triple A" baseball: anyone, anywhere, anytime. Their fame quickly spread among East coast communities.

Wealthy white promoter Walter Cook bought the Babylon Boys in 1886, renamed them the Cuban Giants, and created the first professional Black baseball team by paying the players and arranging year-round games against both white and Black teams. The so-called Cuban connection added an "exotic" element that helped the Giants attract a following among Florida's white winter vacationers. The team played up the Cuban association by speaking a Spanish-like gibberish. They played excellent baseball and eventually won the 1888 Colored Championship of the World. E.B. Lamar purchased the team in 1896 and renamed them the Cuban X Giants.

The Page Fence Giants, sponsored by the Page Woven Wire Company of Adrian, Michigan, were an early exception to the hardship of traveling. J. Wallace Page invented woven wire fencing and was eager to advertise his product. Future Hall of Famer Bud Fowler convinced him that a superstar Black team could do the job while barnstorming throughout the Midwest. J. Wallace agreed, and in 1895 Fowler assembled a powerful team that included future Hall of Famers Frank Grant and Sol White, and hitting sensation Grant "Home Run" Johnson. (Figure 4) Page provided a luxurious private train car to transport the team. It included a kitchen and cook and an all-purpose dining, sitting, and sleeping room for twenty passengers. Freed from the challenges of finding lodging and meals, the Page Fence Giants traveled to 112 cities their first year, becoming the first successful barnstorming Black team to play in multiple cities.

Once the Giants arranged a schedule, they placed promotional ads in the opponent's hometown newspaper highlighting their baseball and entertainment skills. On arrival, they emerged from the train car in their uniforms and fire hats and rode sponsored Monarch bikes in formation down the town's main street to drum up attendance. When the game began, especially against weaker teams, the players would often "clown" by singing songs and giving recitations between innings or performing acrobatic flips after a home run. Riding bikes and clowning reinforced the stereotype that Blacks were there to provide circus-like entertainment for white audiences. This was part of the price Black athletes paid to make a living from their talents. At the same time, their great success against professional and semi-professional white teams helped dispel the notion that Blacks were inferior players who could only perform as curiosities.


Genuine Colored Champions of U. S. and Cuba

Cuban X Giants
Base Ball Club

New York, 190

Figure 3b: Typed letter of booking inquiry on letterhead of the Cuban X Giants, 27 February 1905 signed by owner E. B. Lamar. [Author's Collection]

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Geo. H. Taylor, 1 b. Geo. Wilson, p. & l. f. Grant Johnson, s. s. Joe Miller, p. & r. f.
"Billy" Holland, p. & l. f. **A. S. Parsons, Mgr** Pete Burns, c.
Fred Van Dyke, c. f. Wm. Bingo, 3 b. Chas. Grant, 2 b. Vasco Graham, c. & f.
(OVER.)

Figure 4a: Front and back of 1895 trade card for the Page Woven Fence Company of Adrian MI, featuring their barnstorming baseball team.

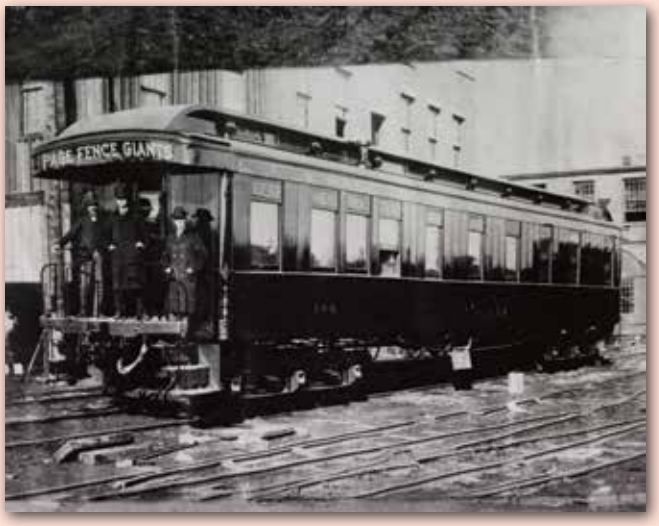

Figure 4b: Press photograph of the 1895 Page Fence Giants Custom Train Coach.

Figure 5: Postcard, received at Spanaway WA 7 September 1910, of Brown's Tennessee Rats. The sender took the photo and used it to make postcards. [Author's Collection]

Figure 6: Photograph of Brown's Tennessee Rats.

Figure 7a: Press photograph of the 1921 Hilldale Daisies by Frank Harris, Philadelphia.

Figure 7b: Front and back of a "rain check" ticket for the Hilldale Daisies 1924 [Tom Daley Collection]

Figure 8: Promotional flyer for the 1930 Kansas City Monarchs playing the Concordia, Kansas team. The broadside extols the Monarchs' new portable flood lights as "not an experiment but a success."

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Figure 9a (left): Photographic souvenir postcard of the 1936 Ethiopian Clowns in full 'tribal' regalia. [Ryan Christoff Collection]

Figure 9b (bottom left): Press photograph of the Ethiopian Clowns with 'tribal' makeup. [Ryan Christoff Collection]

Figure 9c (below): Press photograph of the Clowns' pre-game clowning. [Ryan Christoff Collection]

Players were paid by splitting each game's gate receipts, motivating the Giants to travel and attract as many spectators as possible. The Giants posted a 118-36-2 record in 1885 by playing a mix of Black and white professional and amateur clubs. They also successfully advertised Page Woven Wire fences to crowds ranging from 500 to 3,000 people. The following year they were 80-19 and beat New York's Cuban X Giants ten games to five to proclaim themselves the top team in Black baseball. They remained an elite Black baseball team until, after four years, Page ended his sponsorship, parked the train car and disbanded the team.

The Page Fence Giants' success laid the foundation for future Black professional teams that relied less on clowning and more on a superior brand of baseball. Those teams became the core of the organized Negro Leagues of the 1920s-50s, and their history is well documented.

The Giants were fortunate while their train car lasted, but most Black barnstorming teams endured physically taxing travel as well as societal prejudice. The history of these teams is less well known and includes clubs like Brown's Tennessee Rats, the Ethiopian Clowns, and the Zulu Cannibal Giants.

Because they often played white teams in rural and urban communities, their entertainment was designed to both attract audiences and reduce white discomfort over losing to Black players. Clowning, parading in the streets, performing antics during a game, and even staging minstrel shows, were activities based on stereotypes that generated income, while also diminishing the respect that would have been earned by skilled baseball players. If the Page Fence Giants were the exception among early barnstorming Black teams, Brown's Tennessee Rats represented the norm. The Rats traveled extensively and attracted crowds by combining baseball and humor, taking jesting one step further by adding minstrelsy to their repertoire. Walter E. Brown created the Tennessee Rats in Holden, Missouri as an independent barnstorming team that toured from 1909-1926. The team was not from Tennessee, and the use of "rat" referenced the rats that swam in the polluted waters of the Mississippi, Tennessee, and Missouri Rivers. "Rat" was a distasteful reference, like "savage" or "burglar," that some teams used to purposefully demean themselves as part of this marketing strategy. Yet the Tennessee Rats were anything but mediocre on the field. In 1911 they played

Figure 10a (left): Photographic souvenir postcard of the 1935 Zulu Cannibal Giants in full 'tribal' regalia. [Ryan Christoff Collection]

Figure 10b (below): Amateur photograph of the Zulu Cannibal Giants on parade down an unidentified town's main street. [Ryan Christoff Collection]

201 games and reported a 184-17 record, led by flame-throwing pitcher John Wesley Donaldson, who was 44-3 on the year. Donaldson went on to become a premier pitcher for the Kansas City Monarchs and other elite teams. (Figure 5 & 6)

Brown's teams played throughout the central Midwest, defeated most of the local semi-professional and amateur teams they faced, and offered entertainment on and off the diamond. After every afternoon game, they staged an evening minstrel show with some of the players performing. (The team photo shown here includes a horn presumably used during the evening show.) Tingley, Iowa, located about ninety miles north of Holden, was one of the first stops the team made in 1909. The local paper's coverage seemed more enamored with the minstrel show than the baseball game:

> *Tingley won the first game played with the BROWN'S Tennessee Rats. The ball game was played in the rain and the score was 4 to 2. The BROWN'S Minstrels gave a very good performance at the Opera House. It was an evening of vocal and instrumental music and clog dancing*. (Tingley *Vindicator*, April 22, 1909)

Like the minor leagues in white baseball, barnstorming offered Black players the opportunity to display their skills and chase the dream of playing at the higher-level professional rank. When the Negro Leagues were formed, teams were expected to play serious professional baseball and clowning was discouraged. (Figure 7)

In 1920, Andrew "Rube" Foster formed the first Black professional baseball association, the Negro National League (NNL). The league was modeled after the Major Leagues because Foster believed that "we will always be the underdog until we can successfully employ the methods that have brought success to the great powers that be in baseball of the present era: organization." He wanted an autonomous organization of Black players and teams that would force the major leagues to accept an all-Black team. The early success of the NNL led to the formation of the Eastern Colored League and Southern Colored League, which featured some of the best players in the country, playing on teams such as the Hilldale Daisies.

Despite their success, Negro League teams still had to barnstorm to offset their expenses. Unlike the white major leagues, which permitted barnstorming only after the season, Black teams barnstormed year-round. By

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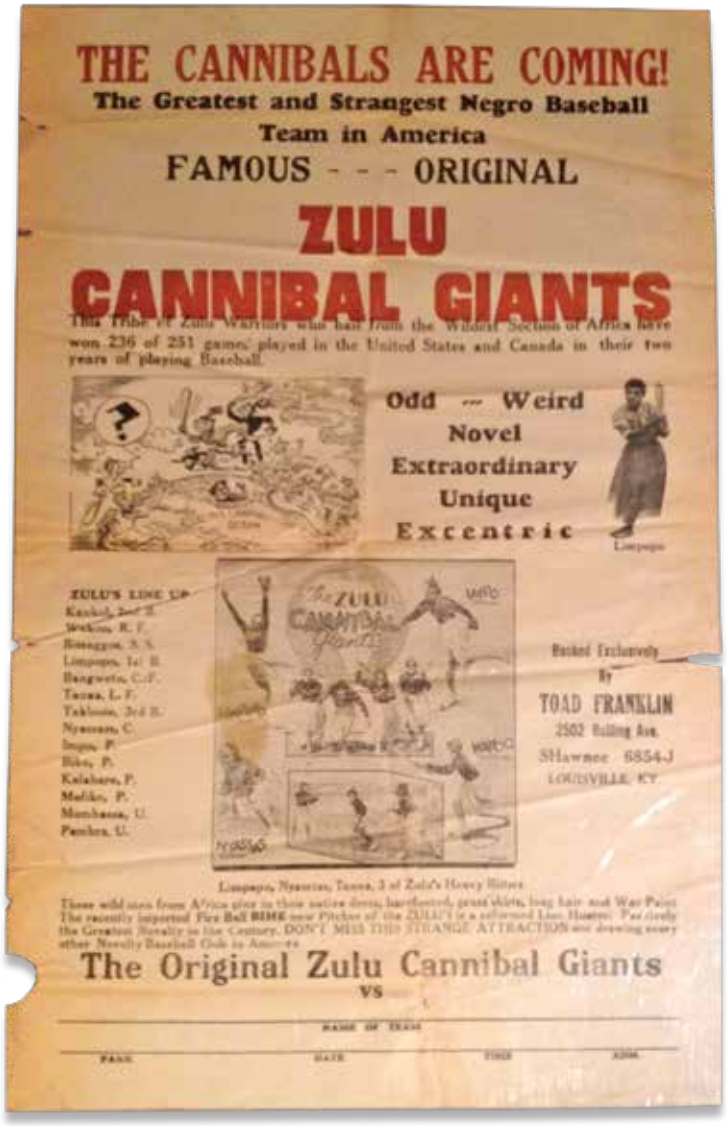

Figure 11: Poster for the Zulu Cannibal Giants "from the wildest section of Africa" with blanks to fill in date, time, and admission price for a future game. [Ryan Christoff Collection]

the 1920s, buses became the preferred mode of travel. The introduction of portable lighting by the Kansas City Monarchs in 1930— five years ahead of Major League Baseball—gave them a leg up as an elite barnstorming team since they could schedule games after daylight hours. (Figure 8)

The Great Depression hastened the National Negro League's demise, as teams began to fold under economic pressure. This in turn encouraged touring by independent and barnstorming teams, which flourished during the 1930s. Stars such as Satchel Paige, the "King of Barnstorming," assembled "All-Star" teams that traveled throughout the country mixing comic routines with serious baseball. As the official Negro Leagues weakened, the pressure to include clowning again became an issue. Although baseball was played by talented athletes, white fans still expected traveling teams to be entertainers. Two Black teams, the Ethiopian Clowns and Zulu Cannibal Giants, were successful in the late 1930s and 1940s playing to predominantly white crowds. But their success was built in part upon perpetuating racial stereotypes. (Figure 9)

In 1934, Johnny Pierce and Hunter Campbell founded the Miami Giants baseball team based on the traveling clowning model. They bought two Cadillacs and traveled up and down the East Coast. In 1936, they renamed the team the Miami Ethiopian Clowns. Syd Pollock, a white man from Tarrytown, New York, was the Clowns' promoter. He urged the owners to insert "Ethiopian" in the team's name to attract crowds by appealing to Black fans who were critical of Mussolini's invasion of Ethiopia. Based on the model of the Harlem Globetrotters—established in 1926 and soon nationally famous for combining basketball athleticism with clowning—Pollock envisioned a team that combined high-quality baseball skills with slapstick comedy. Pollock bought the team in 1937 and, within a few years the Clowns drew large crowds wherever they played—including Yankee Stadium and Chicago's Comiskey Park.

The Clowns dressed like circus clowns, painted their faces, and had exotic Ethiopian-sounding names like Abbadaba, Wahoo, Impo, and King Tut—aka "Richard King, the Clown Prince of Negro League baseball." Their clowning included shadow games (i.e. playing a game without baseballs or bats,) or King Tut pitching to midget Spec Bebop between innings. Most of the comic acts took place before the game. Once the game began, players stripped off their clown outfits to reveal baseball uniforms and played skilled baseball against independent teams.

The Clowns relocated to Cleveland in 1943, removed "Ethiopian" from their name, and joined the Negro American League. In 1946 they moved to Indianapolis, and in 1952 they signed eighteen-year-old Henry Aaron to a contract. Aaron refused to join the pre-game antics during his three months with the team.

Although Major League Baseball's integration, which started in 1947, eroded the Negro American League, the Indianapolis Clowns continued to barnstorm. In 1953, they signed the first professional female player, Toni Stone, to play second base. Although a competent player, Stone was regarded as merely another gimmick to attract fans. Curiously, by 1968 the team was all white. They played into the 1980s before folding. During their heyday, the Clowns appealed to white crowds, their buffoonery reinforcing stereotypes of Black inferiority. One critic called the clowning routines a Faustian bargain that Black athletes had to make to play the game they loved. (Figure 10)

Perhaps the most Faustian baseball bargain of all time was made in 1935 when the Zulu Cannibal Giants were formed in Louisville, Kentucky by Charlie Henry, a former Negro League pitcher. A purely traveling team, they were contemporary with the Clowns and were also represented by Syd Pollock. Henry learned from the Clowns and Paige's All-Stars that an all-Black team needed a comic element to survive. He dreamed up a Zulu tribal team from Borneo whose players wore grass skirts, went bare-chested and barefoot, painted their faces, swung clubs, and

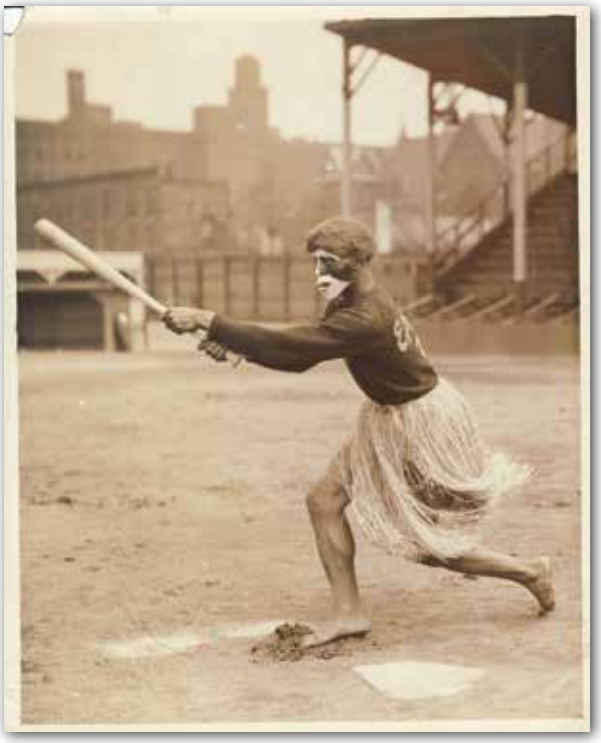

Figure 12a (left): Press photograph of a Zulu Cannibal Giant batting in costume. [Ryan Christoff Collection]

Figure 12b (above): Amateur photograph of a Zulu Cannibal Giant playing in costume. [Ryan Christoff Collection]

had African sounding names like Limpopo, Tankafu and Kangko. During games, they only grunted "Ugh".

When the Zulus arrived in town, they paraded in full grass-skirted regalia, clowning and laughing. Before games, players clowned on the field, chanting and singing in their "native" tongue. When the game began, just like the Clowns, they played serious baseball despite being barefoot and skirted.

Players participated in these demeaning spectacles because they were left with few better options, especially during the depths of the Depression. Eventually, the pay became unpredictable, and players tired of performing barefoot in skirts. Henry sold the team in 1937 to Abe Saperstein, who promoted the Zulus as if they were the baseball equivalent of the Globetrotters. The Zulus are best characterized by Baseball Hall of Famer Buck O'Neil, who played with them in 1937. O'Neil was 25 and knew he had to do whatever he could to play baseball. He later said, "Looking back on it, the idea of playing with the Zulu Giants was very demeaning." The Zulus disbanded for a time and re-formed in the early 1940s, but their popularity, unlike that of the Clowns, waned with the outbreak of World War II. (Figure 11)

Black baseball during the sixty years of segregation was defined by three things: well-played baseball, comic activity, and relentless travel. As the players endured the hardships of constant travel and the challenges of finding housing and meals on the road, they were constantly reminded of their second-class status in a world defined by segregation and racial prejudice. More recently, many of these players and teams have finally received the recognition that was denied them in their lifetime. By telling their stories we honor the sacrifices they made to play the game they loved.

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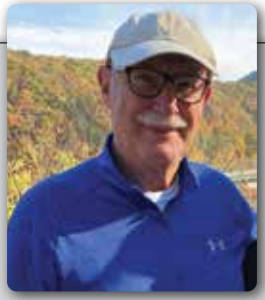

Michael Peich, a devoted baseball fan, historian, and vintage card collector, is Emeritus Professor of English at West Chester University (Pennsylvania). The proprietor of Aralia Press, a fine printing imprint that issues contemporary poetry, he co-founded the West Chester University Poetry Conference, and established the WCU Poetry Center. His website devoted to early 20th century Southern minor league cards is *t209-contentnea.com*.

Swizzle and Serve
Party-Planning & the National U.K. Book Collecting Prize

By Hannah Rose Swan

In mid-May of this year, I set my work at the American Institute of the History of Pharmacy aside and flew to the U.K. to attend Firsts, "London's most popular and prestigious rare book fair." I was not there to shop (the 17 million GBP First Folio being somewhat out of my price range), but instead to collect the National U.K. Book Collecting Prize from the Antiquarian Booksellers' Association, which was jointly awarded to me and a student from Cambridge University. I had submitted my collection, "Swizzle and Serve: Party-Planning Books and Ephemera, 1950-1970," after winning the 2022 Anthony Davis Student Book Collecting Prize during my postgraduate studies in Archives and Records Management at University College London.

I've written before for the *The Ephemera Journal* [23-3 May 2021] about my developing self-awareness as an ephemerist; beginning as a youthful book collector (not realizing that the sundry paper goods I squirreled away would end up being far more significant than owning every volume of the Animorphs book series); becoming more focused in high school and college (assembling a collection around midcentury "gross" foods); and reaching a tipping point during my master's degree.

In the master's program in Book History and Material Culture at the University of Edinburgh, I wrote my dissertation on party planning books published by men's and women's magazines, specifically *Playboy* and *Cosmopolitan*. I was interested in how sexuality, gender, and class influenced the design and contextualization of the books. I already had some party planning material in my collection, but now began to seriously collect on the topic, in part to have source texts from which to draw.

My dissertation research revealed that these materials were not held in any meaningful number by most libraries and that no one else seemed to be collecting them. Even well-known "little cookbook" collections generally don't include party-planning texts. Of the 514 items in the Jerred Metz Collection of Manufacturers' Recipes and

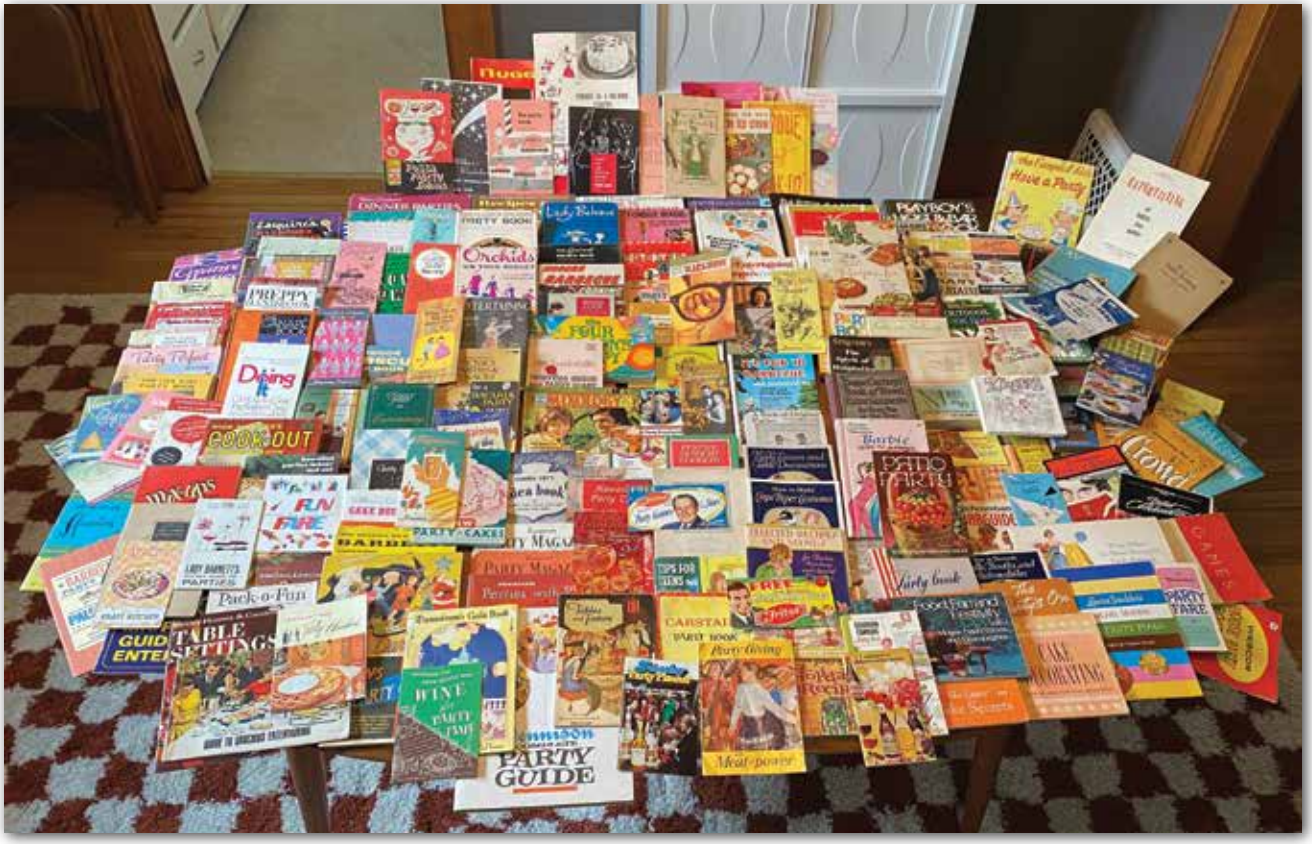

Figure 1. The author's collection laid out, a cornucopia of midcentury color and form.

Figure 2. The Jell-o Girl Entertains*, 1910, Jell-o Company, Le Roy NY, 16-page booklet with a string loop to hang it up for reference. Illustrated by Rose O'Neill, creator of the Kewpies.*

Advertisements at the University of South Carolina, only three are party-related; University of Michigan similarly holds only a handful of party materials in their culinary ephemera collections. They are such important records of social history broadly, and women's history specifically (while also having incredible visual appeal), I felt an obligation to preserve them.

My party-planning collection now encompasses approximately 186 pieces of ephemera and fifty books, focusing on the midcentury American party (approximately 1940 to 1980) - see Figure 1. Generally, I do not collect materials related to children's parties, weddings, or holidays. I also focus on the party in theory, rather than in practice; in other words, I only collect materials on party planning, not the ephemera of parties that were actually held. These temporal and topical restrictions are always flexible (I have some particularly well-designed examples of children's party planning books and ephemera), and they may well shift in the future as I have more funds and more storage space to dedicate to my collection. For the time being, these bounds keep me from living among too many stacks of loose ephemera.

Unsurprisingly, I collect everywhere I go. My materials have been sourced from the internet, from charity, antique, and thrift shops, and at book and ephemera fairs; many have been given as gifts by friends and family, and some come from "Little Free Libraries" in my neighborhood or in exchanges with other collectors. I recently moved to Wisconsin, which has been an ephemera-collector's dream. I have made some really exciting additions for prices ranging from 5 cents to $1.50.

I am an admittedly rapacious collector. My party-planning collection is just part of a broader collection that encompasses over eight-hundred books and pieces of ephemera. There are five main sub-collections (cookery and home economics, liquor advertising, gelatin advertising, erotica, and party planning) with a fair amount of overlap (e.g. *The Jell-O Girl Entertains* - Figure 2). The collection is currently stored in four file boxes, two oversized boxes, and a large swath of the available surfaces in my office. To keep everything straight, I maintain a spreadsheet with full bibliographic information for each item.

I have been reflecting on my collecting interests a lot lately, thinking about the coherence of the different aspects of the collection, and I've come to see it as an attempt to understand how the female gaze and feminine desire are rendered visible through the material text. For example, both a broadside advertising a performance by Bambi Lake in San Francisco in the 1990s and the August 1962 issue of *Confidential* magazine in which Coccinelle reflects upon her gender transition (Figure 3) materially represent what it means to be a woman in print, and to design printed materials about and for women, both trans and cis-gender.

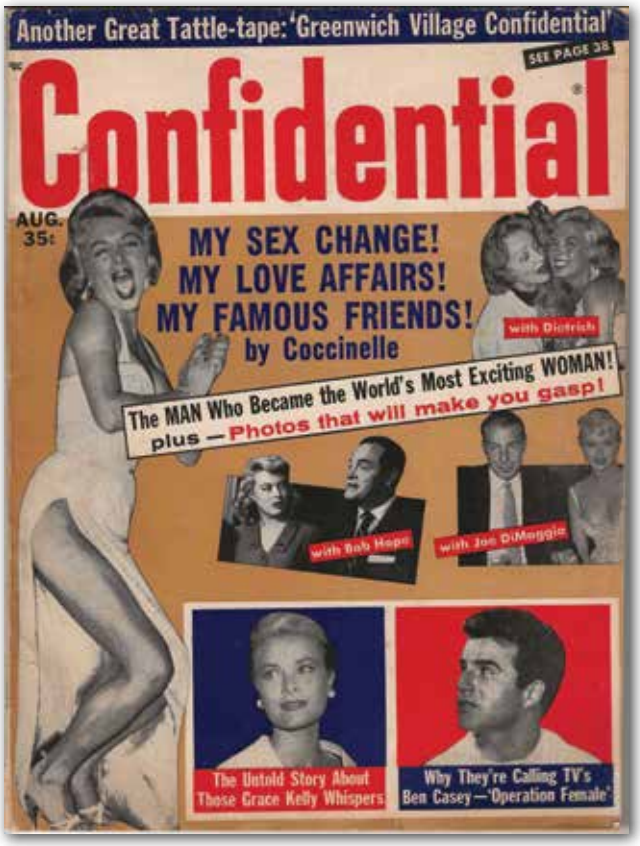

Figure 3. Cover to the August 1961 issue of Confidential*, with Coccinelle, a French trans actress, singer, and entertainer best known for her act at Le Carrousel in Paris, France.*

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I find party-planning materials fascinating for their assumption that there is a "feminine" aesthetic, and for how they express this aesthetic in text and image. This aesthetic is based on a fantasy of the feminine, in all its warmth, softness, informality, and sentimentality. In the advertising world of midcentury America, every facet of design—font, illustration, styling—was gendered, making these items artifacts of both real and perceived mainstream feminine tastes.

My collection does include masculine-coded texts as well. Barbecue was the domain of the Man of the House and my collection overflows with the absurdly sexist "men's humor" that dominated publications like *Playboy*. In contrast to the texts aimed directly at women, these male-focused texts make no mention of the creation of themed centerpieces or how to match the decor to your tableware. If they do, it's clearly noted that these activities are to be completed by the wife, while the man tends a large slab of meat upon the grill. (Figure 4)

Gender issues are pervasive in these texts, especially as norms of entertaining and domestic duties begin to shift in the middle of the 20th century. The era of house servants had waned, while a post-war suburban lifestyle was emerging. Social circles began to revolve around the residential neighborhood; the patio-as-phenomenon emerged. Cultures of sexuality shifted as well—we can look to women winning the right to petition for divorce, the advent of the hormonal birth control pill, the Women's Liberation Movement and second-wave feminism, and the Free Love movement as indicative of these changes. Alongside these major cultural shifts, the sexless, child-focused quality of early twentieth century party-planning literature evolved and broke through societal constraints.

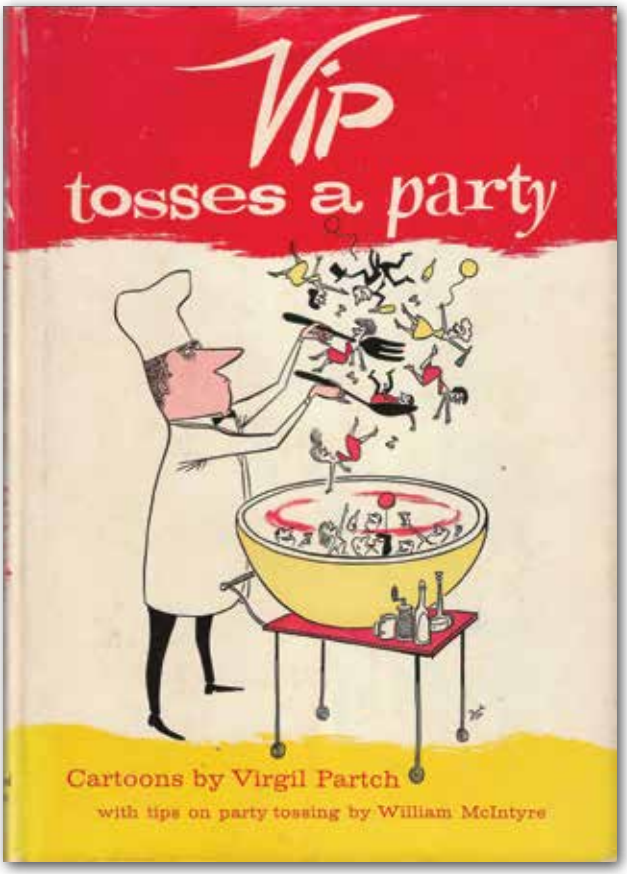

Figure 4. VIP Tosses a Party*, a hard cover 1960 party manual with cartoons, Fawcett Publications. Illustrated by famous cartoonist Virgil Partch.*

Figure 5. Booklet of Pizza Party Ideas *published by Chef Boy-Ar-Dee, an Italian food company originally owned by Ettore Boiardi and based in Milton PA since 1928, but sold to American Home foods in 1946. The firm popularized the make-at-home pizza.*

As a historian of sexuality, I find the intersections of this "loosening" of culture within party planning to be particularly interesting. One of the first items in my collection was *Playboy's Host and Bar Book*, around which a chapter of my dissertation centered (and from which the collection title "Swizzle and Serve" originally came). Like many of the texts in my collection, the book translates party planning into learning how to become "sophisticated." The male reader is made to feel like a member of an exclusive, urbane club embodied by the Playboy lifestyle. A focus on the need for "expert advice" to make socially and culturally correct aesthetic choices raises an awareness of class anxieties.

Some of the rarest items in my collection are artifacts of these sexualized fantasies of sophistication. I have a booklet, *Party Games For Adults Only*, that instructs

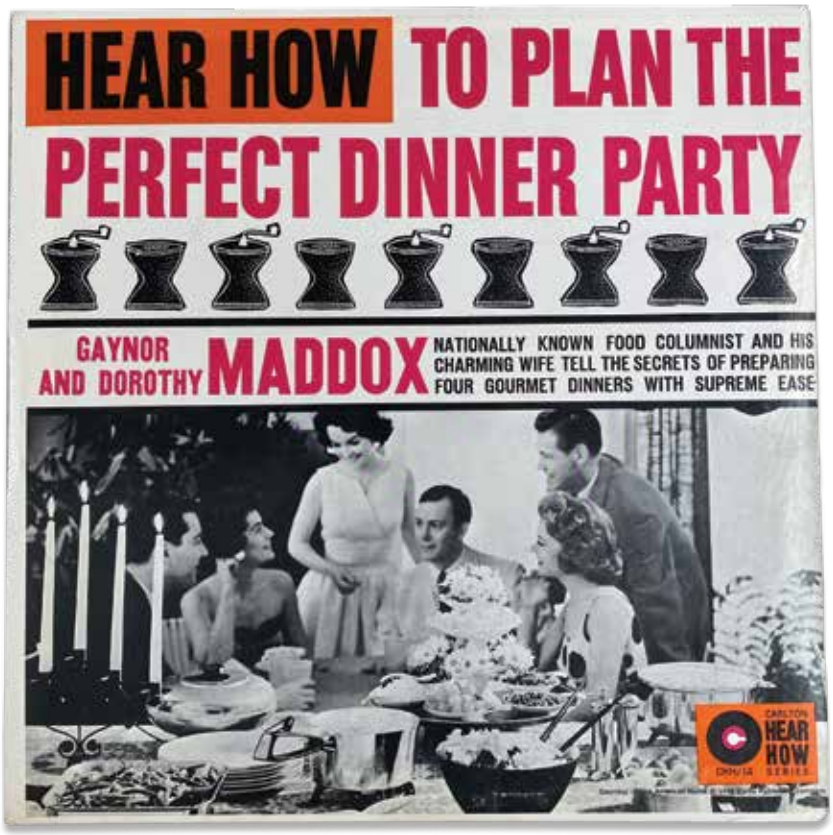

Figure 6. 1950 How to Plan the Perfect Dinner Party*, Carlton Record Corp. with Gaynor ("hereditary gourmet") and wife Dorothy ("the perpetual hostess") Maddox advising on "how to make your guests relax and one on a happy stomach."*

its readers on the ins and outs of such classic swingers' games as strip poker or "Follow the Swallow," a game in which the guests convene on the hosts' bed and try to keep a feather afloat by blowing on it. The cover is illustrated with a keyhole through which the reader spies on an embracing couple (maybe a reference to so-called "key parties," a staple activity of swinging whereby guests would put their keys in a bowl, fish out a different set, and go home with the person whose key they drew). The booklet's recipes seem odd. I personally would not jump to "Hot and Hearty Sandwich Loaf" or "Deluxe Egg Salad" as aphrodisiacs, nor even as good choices for a rousing evening of more conventional party games.

Because most of the texts in my collection were published as advertisements—for food products, cigarettes, liquor, tableware—they are artifacts of corporate interpretations of consumerist desire. (Figure 5) But in their creative direction, the parties themselves also reflect histories of a specifically female gaze. Many of the booklets were styled by women like Virginia Stanton—California hostess par excellence and longtime Party Editor of *House Beautiful* magazine—or written by etiquette experts like Amy Vanderbilt. There is also an emphasis on the party as an outlet for female creative expression, with hostesses encouraged to use their own skills and ideas to create centerpieces or experiment with table design. (Figure 6)

Along the same lines, many of the party planning books and ephemera reflect histories of female entrepreneurs who took the limited roles available to them at the time and translated them into successful careers—Amy Vanderbilt, Laura Scudder, Virginia Stanton, and Brownie Wise all come to mind. Earlier this year I finally purchased a Tupperware party planning book, the fifth edition of *Know How!* The Guide to Making Money with Tupperware. (Figure 7) Tupperware parties, which were such an important part of midcentury culture, have a fascinating history. The "party plan" sales concept was invented by a woman, Brownie Wise, who worked for the Tupperware Company in the 1950s. Her idea was essentially stolen by Tupperware founder Earl Tupper who became jealous that she was (rightly) credited with the company's success, and fired her, going on to expunge any trace of her from the company's history. He went so far as to take remaining

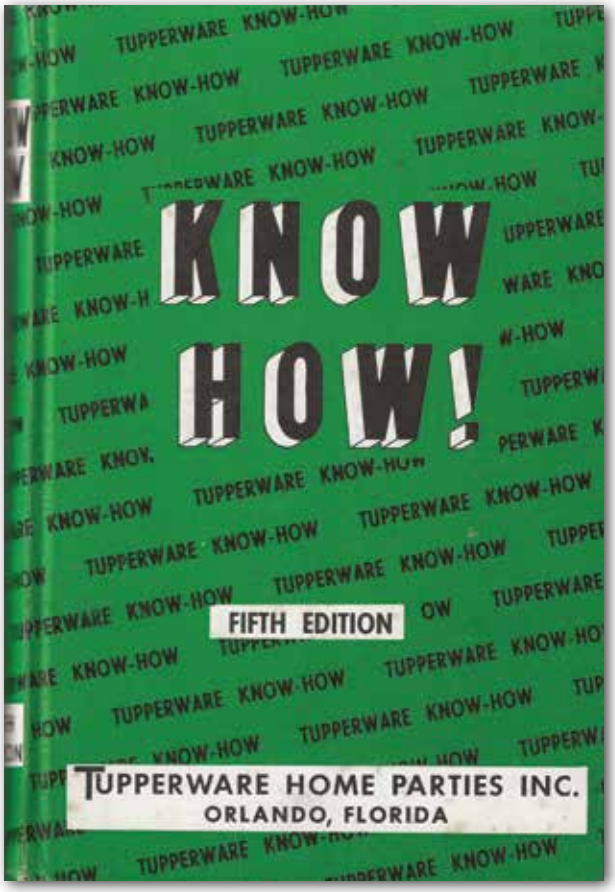

Figure 7. Know How! *- 5th edition 1957, Tupperware Home Parties Inc., Orlando FL. A classic guide to throwing Tupperware selling parties.*

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Figure 8. Front cover to the 1927 The Hostess and Her Table*, and back cover sketches by unknown reader (United States Glass Company, Tiffin OH).*

copies of the autobiography she had written about her success and bury them in a pit near the Tupperware headquarters! *Know How!* joins other Tupperware pieces in my collection, including *Tupperware Party Fare*, and *Tupperware Home Parties Are Fun!!* —a 1950s needlebook given away as a premium by a store in Jefferson, Wisconsin.

These advertising materials presuppose that women are consumers, a well-trod area of midcentury scholarship. But they also specifically presuppose that women are readers, with the text serving as intermediary between the woman and the product. This is why having a "pristine" copy of any given item in my collection is in many ways a drawback. Splatters of grease on a page dedicated to making donuts, manuscript adjustments to recipes, a shopping list and receipts pinned into the back of a Depression-era cookbook, or, a personal favorite, table diagrams and measurements sketched out in pencil on the back of *The Hostess and Her Table* (a 1927 booklet advertising Tiffin glassware), are all traces of the ephemeral acts of cooking, hostessing, throwing a party and, above all, reading. (Figure 8)

I hope to develop my collecting, especially around gaps in what I have been able to find readily at antique malls and ephemera fairs. This includes items like party-planning texts published for consumers of color, like *The Ebony Cookbook: A Date with a Dish*, or the didactic party materials published by independent and alternative presses. Though my focus has been largely on dominant culture as laid out by large corporations, many "hippie" presses published similar materials; I envision a project in which I am able to compare and contrast these divergent visions of entertaining.

One of the most exciting parts of these party-planning texts is their intersection with my life outside of books and collecting. The question I get asked most often as a collector is whether I use the texts to host my own parties, and the answer is a resounding yes! One of my more rabid obsessions is the tablescape—the design and laying of the table for the visual pleasure of one's guests, a geography upon which taste is mapped in all its literal and figurative iterations. Of all the tips, tricks, hints, and helps, the table setting suggestions are those I turn to most often in my own party-throwing. I have carved pineapples into rafts of piña coladas, sculpted quivering towers of Jell-O, spent hours at the thrift store sifting through dishware to find the perfect vessel for my garnishes—all in the name of the table.

In the collection, some of my all-time favorite tablescapes are those found in the booklets written by Nancy Prentiss, who wrote copy and styled advertisements for the Westmorland Silver Company. For several years I had been searching for one booklet in particular, *The Perfect Hostess*, only to come across a near-fine copy in an antique mall in rural South Dakota. I am only slightly embarrassed to say that I audibly gasped and did an excited little hop upon seeing the distinctive bright purple cover. (Figure 9) Her use of color and centerpieces is stunning, especially when rendered in the hyper-reality of the photo-lithographed illustrations. In London this May, I also visited the PBFA's London International Book Fair, where I picked up an incredible plate from an unnamed nineteenth-century book. It illustrates an "Artistic Arrangement for Dinner Table," featuring a decorative

pond (!) for the table centerpiece, complete with tiny Venetian gondolas and sculptural mermaid fountain. (Figure 10)

My love of the dramatic table extends into recipes. Alongside my party-planning materials, I collect books and ephemera advertising gelatin. To me, there is no better embodiment of the extravagant artifice of the midcentury table than the Jell-O mold. Though there are only a handful of gelatin advertising booklets that focus on party planning (*The Jell-O Girl Entertains* and *Entertaining Round the Calendar*, *The Easy Knox Way* being two examples from my own collection), the imagery of the advertising absolutely revolves around centerpieces, tables, and entertaining. The use of "jellies" as centerpieces dates back centuries, but reached its peak in the Victorian era. Along with the "Artistic Arrangement for Dinner Table" plate, I also purchased an accompanying plate of "Artistic Jellies," awe-inspiring in their colors and shapes. I can only hope to someday create a gelatin sculpture half as elegant.

Looking to the future, I am loath to have my collection live in a vacuum, existing solely for my own pleasure. As such, I intend to eventually place it at Scripps College, a small liberal arts women's college in Southern California and my undergraduate alma mater, where it can be accessible to scholars and live in conversation with the existing domestic collections. Given that I am only thirty years old, this will happen in an as-yet unimaginable future; my project now is to consider the ways I can bring my community to my collection and my collection to my community.

In a world in which money was no object, my dream would be to open a hybrid gallery, library, and event space in which my collection would live as a participatory "Party Archive," serving as resource, inspiration, and archive. Instead, I have organized a series of—yes—parties, wherein I invite friends, colleagues, and acquaintances to my home to peruse my collection while enjoying canapés and cocktails. "Activation" is perhaps an overused buzzword at this point, but no better turn of phrase describes my intention with these parties. Without the interaction of others, my collection feels inert; bringing in people of different backgrounds and generations to laugh at, exclaim over, and take inspiration from these materials does truly "activate" them.

Along the same lines, I have also worked to expand my social media presence. My Instagram page, @EphemeraParty, has been a great way to connect with other collectors (and Jell-O enthusiasts) and to share the gems of my collection. Looking ahead to more ambitious projects, I would love to document my own (occasionally disastrous) efforts at replicating the party ideas from my collection. There is a growing interest in party planning, especially with a retro spin, and social media is a great way to connect with other midcentury party devotees like myself. It also seems to be entering mainstream consciousness; the recent television program "Drag Me to Dinner" has been a major source of inspiration, both for my collecting and my own party-giving.

My collection brings me so much joy (including many giggles at gag-inducing food selections and garish decor ideas) and one of the best parts of winning the Anthony Davis and National book collecting prizes has been the chance to share it with other ephemerists and bibliophiles. I see the collection as having developed interconnected

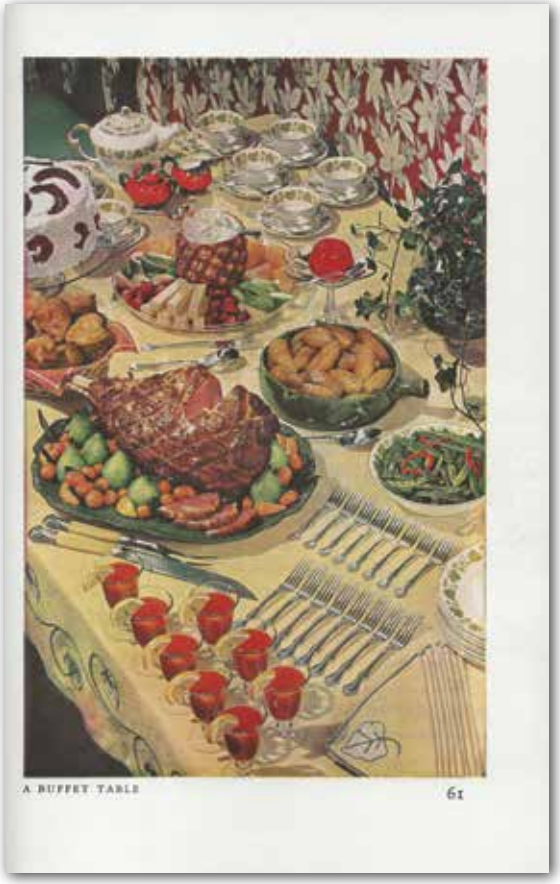

Figure 9. Front cover to The Perfect Hostess*, and page 61 illustration of a buffet table (1946 Westmorland Sterling, Aluminum Cooking Utensil Co.) The booklet was written and styled by Nancy Prentiss.*

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Figure 10: Plate from The Encyclopedia of Practical Cookery*, edited by Theodore Francis Garrett, Lippincott 1890.*

circles of community around me—from my friends who have attended my own parties to the booksellers who have aided me in my collection development, to the other enthusiasts I've met along the way.

In the end, my collecting always comes back to a sense of matrilineality; how I, as a collector, fit into a lineage of female bibliophiles, how I can preserve histories of feminine ingenuity and entrepreneurship, and how I can use the texts to express my own creativity through party-giving. Perhaps more than anything else, the collection reflects my own paternal grandmother—the minister's wife, queen of the church picnic and mistress of gelatin and whipped topping desserts—and my maternal grandmother—the cocktail party matriarch holding court in her midcentury California ranch house. It reflects my own mother, an intuitive chef and eternally thoughtful and elegant hostess, from whom I inherited my bookishness and the sense of humor that undergirds my collection. To be a collector is to be a steward, and I take so much joy in the stewardship of this particular thread of women's history, shining a light on the labor and creativity of the authors, designers, illustrators, and readers of midcentury party-planning texts.

Hannah Swan is the archivist for the School of Pharmacy at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, currently working on a National Endowment for the Humanities grant-funded project to process, digitize, and exhibit the collections of the American Institute of the History of Pharmacy. She holds a postgraduate degree in Archives and Records Management from University College London and a master's in Book History and Material Culture from the University of Edinburgh. Previously, she worked as a Reference Assistant at the Phillips Library of the Peabody Essex Museum, was the recipient of a Fulbright fellowship to Tajikistan, and spent time living and working in Almaty, Kazakhstan. She is the 2022 recipient of both the Anthony Davis Book Collecting Prize and the U.K. National Book Collecting Prize from the ABA for her personal collection of midcentury party-planning books and ephemera. She is shown here with her award, and her recreation of a 'tablescape' from her collection.

American Printing of Letters and Numerals with Stencils 1807-1848

By David Kaminski

The history of stenciling is nearly as old as—or perhaps older than—modern humans, and the technique spans many continents and cultures, from hands used as stencils in early cave art to stenciling on pottery, fabric, illuminated manuscripts, playing cards, walls, furniture, paper, and other items. Like printing in general, stenciling is valued for its ability to create repeated patterns and multiple copies, saving time. Like moveable type, it affords the ease of interchangeable letters and numerals.

This article is intended to share some of the earliest known examples of making stencils and of stenciled letters and numerals on assorted ephemeral items in the United States. The outline here may help collectors, archivists, librarians, and others to seek, identify, catalog, and share more accurate dates and information about stencils, especially the stenciling of letters and numerals. This article is by no means a complete survey of stencils in the first half of the nineteenth century, but the items discussed illustrate some of the many ways stencils were used. While the earliest known use dates cited here are grounded in research, stencils and stenciled items from earlier dates will likely be uncovered.

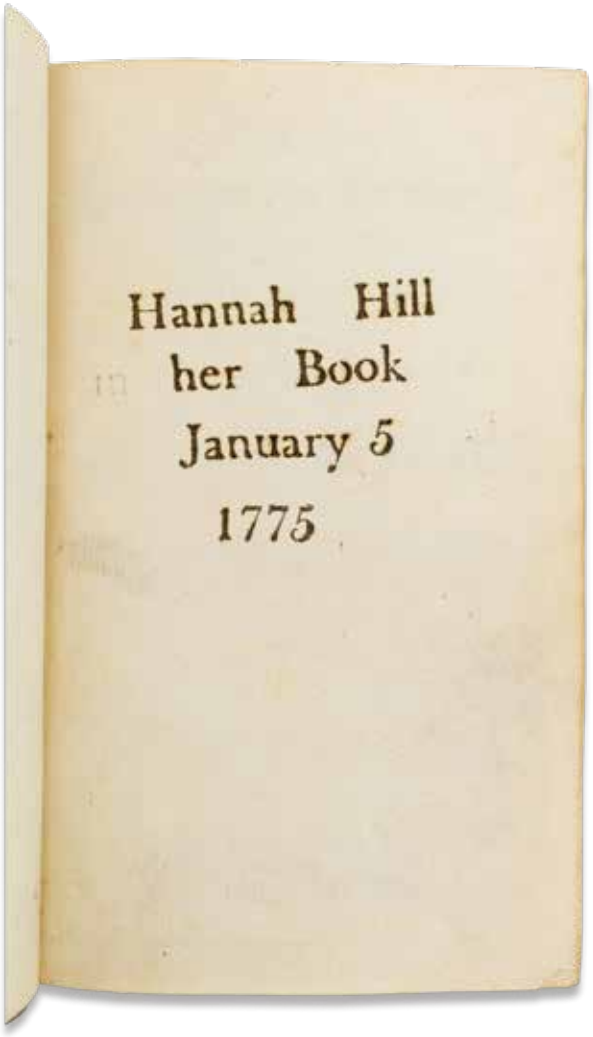

Figure 1: An example of movable or marking type to identify Hannah Hill's book in 1775. [courtesy Phillip J. Pirages Fine Books and Manuscripts]

Before embarking on a full discussion of stenciled items, it is important to take note of some ephemera that is often misidentified as having been stenciled.

Movable type, marking type, stamp, or stencil?

Examples of items misidentified as having been stenciled can be found on public auction websites, in online photo collections, in institutional collections, and elsewhere. Hand-painted objects are often misidentified. Perhaps the most commonly misidentified items are philatelic. Exploring the history of type in philately, collector and historian W. J. Duffney wrote that printing "devices were made from movable type procured from local print shops." European straightline postmarks inspired Americans to copy them, with "[t]he earliest straightline...[being] March 15, 1756." The use of type, hand stamps, and stencils in philately is discussed below. Following are some advertisements with dates that may help collectors assess whether an item has been created with type or stencil.

In London's The Public Advertiser on May 8, 1767, John Sutter took out an ad, excerpted here:

> "JOHN SUTTER, Engraver and Printer...has invented a particular Method of marking Linen, with a Liquid that stands Washing and Boiling....The Machine is so constructed that any Person may mark Linen, Books, &c. in an Instant....They may have a whole Alphabet with a Set of Figures...to mark any Name, or Number they please."

I believe that "the machine" described is a frame for movable type rather than a stencil set. I have not yet found any other references to Sutter's machine. In an article on stencils and type, professor and author Eric Kindel discusses Moore's Marking Types—a set of types and a frame used for printing on linens, books, cards, etc. that were patented by Isaac Moore and William Pine in 1771 in England. These appear to be similar to the method invented by Sutter. Philadelphia newspaper advertisements placed by George Fenner (1771) and by Nicholas Brooks and Francis Daymon (1773) indicate they sold Sutter, Moore, or similar type. Daymon's ad offers a variety of choices for frames: "... letters of different kinds, sizes and figures, fixed in neat brass, hard metal, or wood frames, toehold initials, and names at length ..." As late as 1880, what sounds like a similar set, a "Linen Marker and Printer, for marking clothing, etc., with type sufficient for

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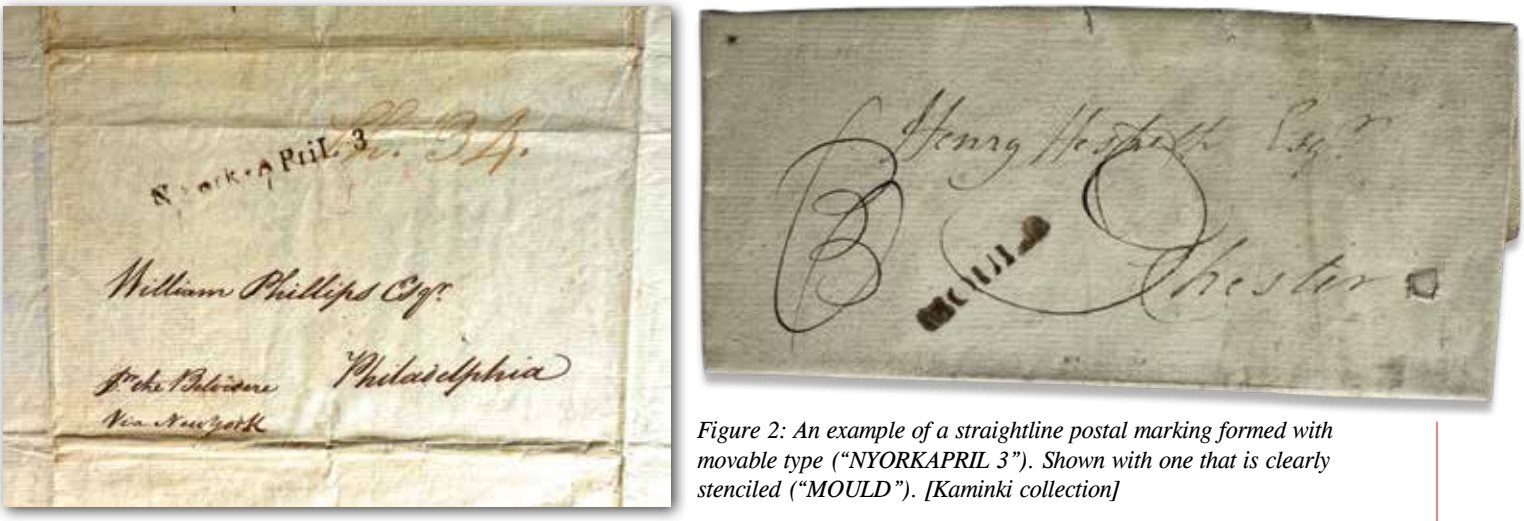

Figure 2: An example of a straightline postal marking formed with movable type ("NYORKAPRIL 3"). Shown with one that is clearly stenciled ("MOULD"). [Kaminki collection]

several names, ink, etc. com[p]lete" was sold in Memphis, Tennessee.

Custom-cut stamp markings may also be misperceived as having been created by stencil. The cutting of stamps specific to individuals was done by people in a variety of professions. In 1772, Joseph Hiller of Salem, MA, who was in the business of clock and watchmaking, engraving, and seal-cutting offered to make "Stamps, Ink, &c. for marking Gentlemen and Ladies Linen." In 1774, James Youle of New York, an importer of many items including "steel letters and numbers," also worked in metal. "He makes and grinds razors, and all kinds of cutlery. … Also cuts Gentlemen and ladies names for marking linens or books." In 1775, Thomas Muse of Boston, working in Newburyport, MA, also "cut stamps." Stamps and marking types, like stencils, were for personal items of some value that could be easily lost or intermingled with the items of others.

Figure 1 is an example of movable type or marking type in Hannah Hill's 1762 copy of The Book of Common Prayer. The rigidity of this form of type is made evident by the light inking of the word "in" near the gutter.

Philatelic examples using type, handstamps, and stencils

Figure 2 shows a straightline postal marking dated 1797 from London to Philadelphia, via New York. Whether this is "movable type procured from local print shops" as described by Duffney or was made using a type set similar to those described above is not clear. We can agree that this example was made using type. The second straightline, "MOULD," was on a 1799 letter sent from Mold in Wales (Flintshire) to nearby Chester, England. "The impression was made with a regular (probably brass) lettered name-stamp with over-inking which led to an appearance of the U, U & L being stencil-like," according to noted Postal Historian and author Jeams Grimwood-Taylor, RDP. He mentioned it was "listed in the Willcocks & Jay 1990 catalogue as W1567 and was recorded for at least 1790-99."

Collector and philatelic author Frank Mandel wrote that he has been "able to document the use of [American] stencils at several dozen post offices during the nineteenth century, beginning in the 1820s." An 1829 stenciled postmark from Kingston, NY, is the final example shown in Figure 3.

Weighing the difficulties and virtues of type and stencils

Type is limited in size, precast, readily available, movable, and endlessly flexible. As seen in the postal cover in Figure 2, the imperfect "APriL," communicates perfectly. Stencils, regardless of size, including those for single name plate and business stencils, must be custom-cut or created with cutting die. Their light weight and large area provide for ease of use. While such large-format stencils must be customized, single stencil letters and numerals are as "movable" as type.

For books and objects like postal covers that require a smaller marking, using any kind of type is perhaps easier than trying to hold a small, flat stencil and applying liquid or paste ink. Among the samples collected, the earlier personalized metal stencils for individuals are flat. Later ones were standardized to have an indentation which helped liquid ink pool and contact the surface to be stenciled.

Figure 3: Two stenciled postmarks from Kingston NY on the cover to an 1829 letter: "paid" and the circular stamp. [courtesy Dr. James Milgram]

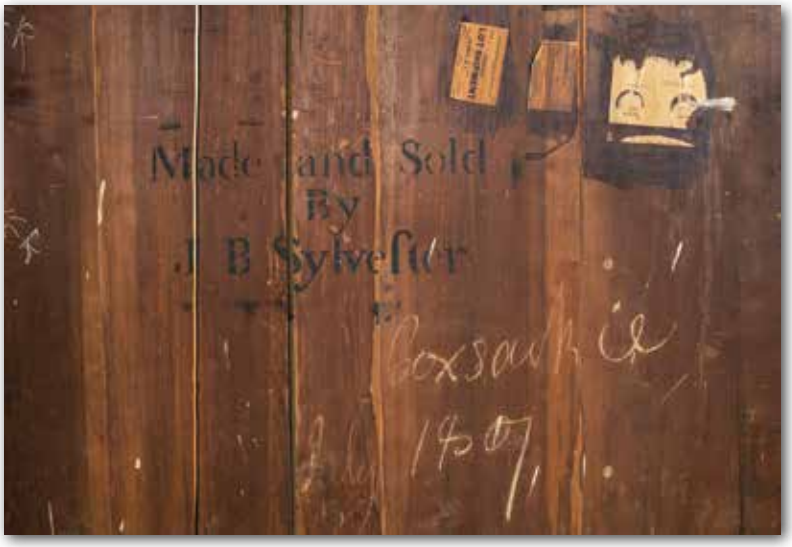

Figure 4: American maker's mark stenciled in 1807 on the back of a chest of drawers. [courtesy Collection of the New York State Museum]

Using type to print by hand on larger items was challenging. Moore's Marking Types and other forms of metal type were limited by the small size of the typeface and the difficulty in printing clearly on coarsely woven textiles such as canvas, or on wood furniture, barrels, crates, and bales. In theory, large stamps or large wooden type could be used, but they could not be positioned fully flush against a rough, uneven, or curved surface. Further, it would take some effort and practice to use a large stamp or large wooden type with enough ink or paste to produce a good result on a rough surface, with one opportunity to make the mark. Using a stencil, held firmly in place and then inked as many times as desired with a brush, was easier. (This is not to say that ink stamping on furniture did not occur, because it did, along with heated metal "branding" and the application of paper labels.)

The need for many items with the same markings was perfect for stencils—unless a trained painter was hired. In a period when decorative and other stenciling was popular, one might expect the ubiquitous use of stencils in early militia and military items, fire buckets, and fire bags. But many thousands of these early items were instead painted by hand. One example, fire buckets, were often hand-painted well after stencils were in use. As described below, however, stencils were often advertised for marking on barrels and bales repeatedly with perfect regularity—an activity that could be performed even by the unskilled.

The earliest use of stencils in the United States?

Though of French origin, the brass stencils created by Jean Gabriel Bery for Benjamin Franklin, now at the American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia, are thought to be the earliest in the United States. One might consider Franklin's use to be the first American stenciling of letters. Franklin practiced two capital "A"s on a correspondence he received from Samuel Curson and Isaac Gouverneur dated 20 December, 1781.

On furniture, the earliest dated stencil use I can find is an American maker's mark from New York State, that reads "Made and Sold By J B Sylvester." It appears on the back of a chest of drawers definitively dated by the chalked writing, "Coxsackie / July 1807." [Figure 4]. According to Dr. Philip D. Zimmerman, "Although stencils were used on many types of decorative arts, they never replaced paper labels on furniture. Mid-eighteenth-century British trade cards set graphic standards that far exceeded the constraints of stencils. These distinctive forms of advertising were larger than labels and communicated more complex messages through ornate illustrations."

Making and selling brass, tin, and silver stencil plates

Documentation of individual stencil-makers is elusive. Following is a list of early stencil-cutters who worked in metal, and who were not primarily associated with decorative work such as that found on wallpaper, furniture, ceramics, and the like.

In an advertisement dated February 18, 1823, Cushing & Appleton of Salem, Massachusetts, implied that their worker had a decade of experience making metal stencil plates. The ad offered "SILVER PLATES …[that] will not corrode like brass, and cost but a small sum. The letters can be cut in any style, and by a person that has worked at the above business for the last ten years. The above Plates answer for marking Visiting Cards, Books, &c."

In 1822, Jacob Maas, an engraver from Charleston, South Carolina (believed to be the same Jacob Maas who was an engraver in Philadelphia in 1825) advertised "Improved Pierced Stencils, (in general use in Philadelphia), for marking Names, Initials, Fac Similes, Arms on Linen, with Durable Ink, or in Books, on Cards, &c. with common ink. ALSO,

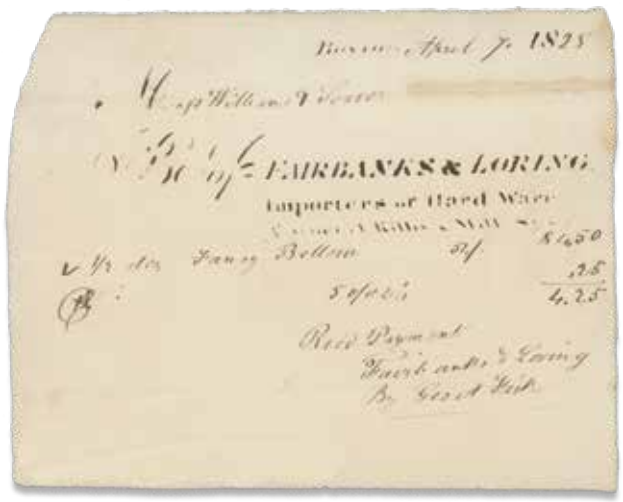

Figure 5: 1828 billhead showing the imprint of a stencil cut to resemble three different printing type-faces for the name of the business, its details, and address. An English roundhand writing style was used for the city, "Boston," the century portion of the date, "18," the first letter for the buyer's title "M," and "Bot of" in the same way that engraved billheads were often engraved. [Kaminski collection]

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Figure 6: Brass stencil made for "Sgt. Louis Albaugh / Co. A, 1st New York Vols." to produce calling cards, either at the time of his service in the Mexican War or after. [Kaminski Collection]

Pierced Plates, of Names, Alphabets, Figures, &c. for marking Bales, Packages, &c." Here, we find two products: the "Improved Pierced Stencils" for marking smaller items, and "Pierced Plates" for larger items.

In 1823 in Boston, several merchants and engravers sold metal stencils, though their descriptions varied. These variations suggest an emerging vocabulary to describe these stencils to the public as distinct from cast metal "name plates," metal "marking types," and decorative stencils for walls and furniture made from thin leather, pasteboard, oiled paper, oil-cloth, etc.

Nathaniel Dearborn, who had in 1821 advertised an "engraving business" and "copperplate engraving," announced in a January 1823 ad that he "FURNISHES Silver and Brass Plates, for Visiting cards or Bills of Parcels." A. J. Allen ran a similar advertisement. The language does not make it entirely clear that either man was selling or making stencils. Less ambiguous language soon followed. In May, Dearborn indicated he "CUTS Stencils or Perforated Plates, for Cards, Bills of parcels, &c. through brass or silver." Another merchant, J. Brown, offered "Perforated Bill and Store Card PLATES, with which a person can do his own printing." Charles Barrell advertised "Every Person his own Printer. PERFORATED Bill, Card and Store Plates... enabling the person to mark two hundred pieces an hour." A second Barrell ad identified the services of a specific maker: "Perforated Stencil Plates...cut by HENRY JOHNSON." In 1824, Dearborn provided another option: to have "Tin Stencils and Figures for marking Bales and Boxes." While many metal stencils exist, I have yet to locate one made of silver.

Philadelphia was an early locus of stencils, made clear by Jacob Maas's reference to it in 1822 when he advertised from South Carolina bout "Improved Pierced Stencils, (in general use in Philadelphia)." It is not known who was making them or selling them. However, in 1824, a Philadelphia ad appears, likely from Joseph Danby, an engraver. Titled "EVERY PERSON THEIR OWN PRINTER," it read "DANBY's only real improved Pierced Plates, by which Ladies and Gentlemen can print...names, initials...Pierced Alphabets and Figures for marking Packing Cases, &c."

Houses would find it worthy their attention to use these. In large establishments in manufacturing towns in England, they save the labour of one or two hands."

The collections I have explored contain no stencil name plates dated between 1822 and roughly 1846, suggesting that stencil name plates of this earlier era have not been dated accurately and might be assumed by librarians and archivists to be later. Assigning a date to a personalized stencil is made more challenging by the fact that the owner's date of death is often the only date that is definitively known.

Stenciled billheads

Stenciled billheads from Boston have been found with dates as early as April 7, 1828. [Figure 5]. While additional examples from Boston and Philadelphia dating to subsequent years have been located, they are certainly much scarcer than the profusion of printed billheads from this time period.

Stenciled canvases

A separate commodity, framed blank canvases for painting, were stenciled on the back with maker's marks in the United States in the 1830s—a practice begun in London in the late 1790s. This has been thoroughly documented by Norman E. Muller.

Settable-unit stencils

In 1840, Edwin Allen of Windham, Connecticut, received patent no. 1,767, "Stencil-plate or Apparatus for Marking Boxes, &c" for inventing a "rectangular frame" with "grooves to admit the plates." This patent also used the term "perforated plates," hearkening back to the language of 1823. A well functioning frame to join letters was certainly an advancement.

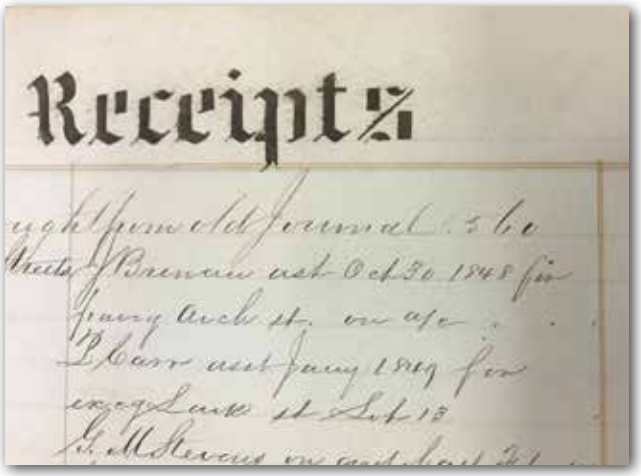

Figure 7: Stenciled heading beginning 1843 in the account book of the New York State Chamberlain. [from the Albany County Hall of Records]

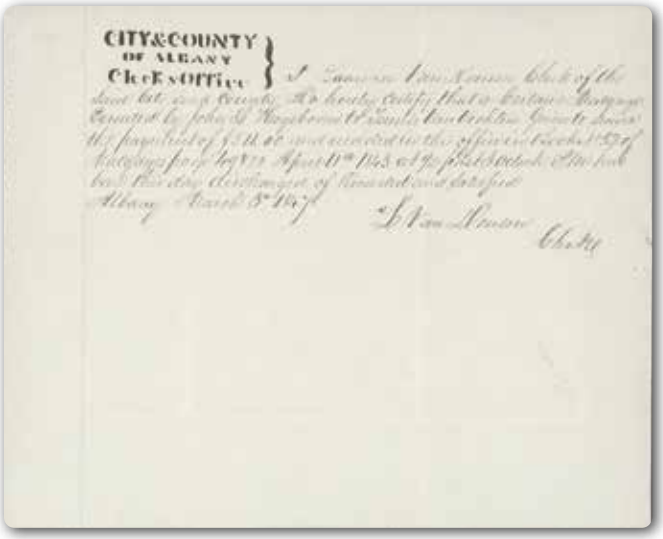

Figure 8: Official receipt in manuscript signed by L. Van Deusen, county clerk of Albany, March 3, 1847 - with a stenciled heading. [Kaminski collection]

Early cutting dies for making stencils

In the first week of January 1840, Nathaniel Dearborn of Boston was selling "one set Steel Alphabet and figures, for cutting Stencil letters in Parchment or Sheet Lead" which suggests that he had been using the set for some time, though I do not know what that date might be, or if he was the only person with such a set. In April 1843, a Pittsfield, Massachusetts, paper ran a similar ad: "GEORGE W. MEAD will make to order for Manufacturers DIES for cutting letters, and figures for marking and ornamenting Cloths. This is a new mode, very beautiful, and a great saving of time and expense…Stamps and Brand Marks, (setts [sic] of figures and letters cut to any size)." It is worth noting that these cutting dies by Dearborn and Mead were in use and being sold well before those advertised by the Metcalf brothers: "[I]n 1851, M.J. Metcalf invented and put in execution, in Boston, the plan of making Stencil Plates with steel dies."

Arriving at the earliest possible date for the creation of small American cutting dies used to create letters or numerals for calling cards is a challenge; further research is needed. While Cushing & Appleton's 1823 ad indicates they may have been hand-cutting metal stencils for visiting cards as early as 1813, creating the small dies necessary to cut them is an altogether different task.

My current research has turned up a copper stencil assumed to be made for a soldier during or after his service in the Mexican-American War (1846-1848). [Figure 6]. The slight regularity and shapes of the letters and number suggest they were created by hand. A peculiarity in this stencil is that the overall precision of the letters is not matched by the highly irregular decorations around the edges, suggesting perhaps that two people of differing skills created it. This particular stencil does not include any secondary metal as a frame. It is a relatively flat piece of copper, folded with the sharp edges to the back. While this stencil does not have a recessed area for ink to pool like other (later?) designs with the dedicated frame, the edges do turn slightly upwards when the stencil is pressed to a flat surface, creating a minor indentation to collect the ink. The date of this stencil suggests that small dies were not in wide use, or yet being made, before 1846 to 1848.

Stencils for official books and papers

In the Office of the Chamberlain in Albany, New York, the transition from account books that were fully handwritten to those that incorporated stencils occurred in 1843, when the stenciled words "Receipts" and "Expenditures" start to appear as page headings. [Figure 7]. The stencil is identifiable not only from the uniform size and breaks in the letters, but by the visibly horizontal brushstrokes used in applying the ink. The previous handwritten titles were certainly legible, but the bold stencils make for clear headings.

A receipt with a stencil being used like an official stamp, "CITY & COUNTY OF ALBANY Clerks Office," dated March 3, 1847, shows how stencils were used in combination with handwritten text for other types of official business. [Figure 8]. Earlier receipts in this office had these words printed. Perhaps the stenciling was seen as more flexible in its placement or was an effort to reduce printing costs. Also, this stencil may have been used in a transition period prior to the adoption of an official stamp. The formal arrangement of the lettering suggests the intent to devise a "secure" imprint; however, a stencil could easily be reproduced. In the end, stenciling of this kind in official paperwork appears to have been short-lived.

Identification and cataloging will allow for more research

I hope that this article provides a useful timeline, list of ephemera, and helpful information for verifying the early use of letter and numeral stencils. Once similar items are identified and cataloged by archivists, librarians, and scholars, a greater pool of examples will be available to the public for research. While stenciling may seem a minor element in the history of writing, marking, or commerce, it is not trivial. Decorative stenciling has been extensively studied. Studying the stenciling of letters and numerals not only expands our understanding of stenciling history, but adds to the understanding of letterform development, the history of labels and manufacturers' marks, and the evolution of official paperwork in businesses, offices, and government.

David Kaminski has worked as a musician, educator, media specialist, and producer. He began researching and collecting American handwriting and penmanship in 2013, and he continues to do so. His donated collections can be found online and in libraries and institutions along the East Coast. The largest portion of his collection — and in particular his stencil collection — is at Weinberg Memorial Library, the University of Scranton.

Henry Jacques Gaisman, the Kodak Autographic Camera, & "Fatty" Arbuckle

By Jeremy Rowe

Several factors led to the dramatic popularity of the real photo postcard in the first decades of the twentieth century. Among them were the introduction in 1898 of Rural Free Delivery (direct delivery of mail to rural addresses); the transition from "Private Mailing Card" to "Post Card" in 1901; Eastman Kodak's introduction of roll film; the proliferation of inexpensive hand-held cameras (beginning ca.1888 and spreading rapidly as manufacturers took advantage of the growing amateur photography market); the ability of amateurs to process and print at home using tutorials and supplies offered in publications such as *Photo Miniature*, *Camera and Darkroom*, and *American Amateur Photographer*; and in 1905 the inclusion of a chapter on collecting postcards in *The Photographic Picture Postcard* by Wall and Snowden.

The resulting explosion of interest in amateur photography produced a plethora of snapshots, non-commercial images in family albums, and photographic postcards. As the market grew and the process of making amateur photographs and postcards became familiar, manufacturers offered new formats, such as panoramic cameras, and more elaborate amateur cameras with better lenses and accessories.

The Eastman Kodak Company blossomed during the era of the real photo postcard, producing thousands of cameras

Figure 1: Circa 1914 photograph of Henry Jacques Gaisman holding a Kodak "Autographic" No. 3A camera. Gaisman invented the "Autographic" camera and film that permitted photographers to write brief notes on each exposure on the film's backing paper through a small trap door on the back of the camera. As the film was processed, the carbon transferred from the backing by the stylus blocked light from hitting the film and resulted in white writing when the negative was printed. [Collection of the author]

Figure 2 (below): Photographic copy of a receipt dated July 8, 1914, from the Eastman Kodak Company to Henry Jacques Gaisman for the payment of $300,000 for the rights to his patents for the "Autographic" design for cameras and film. [Collection of the author]

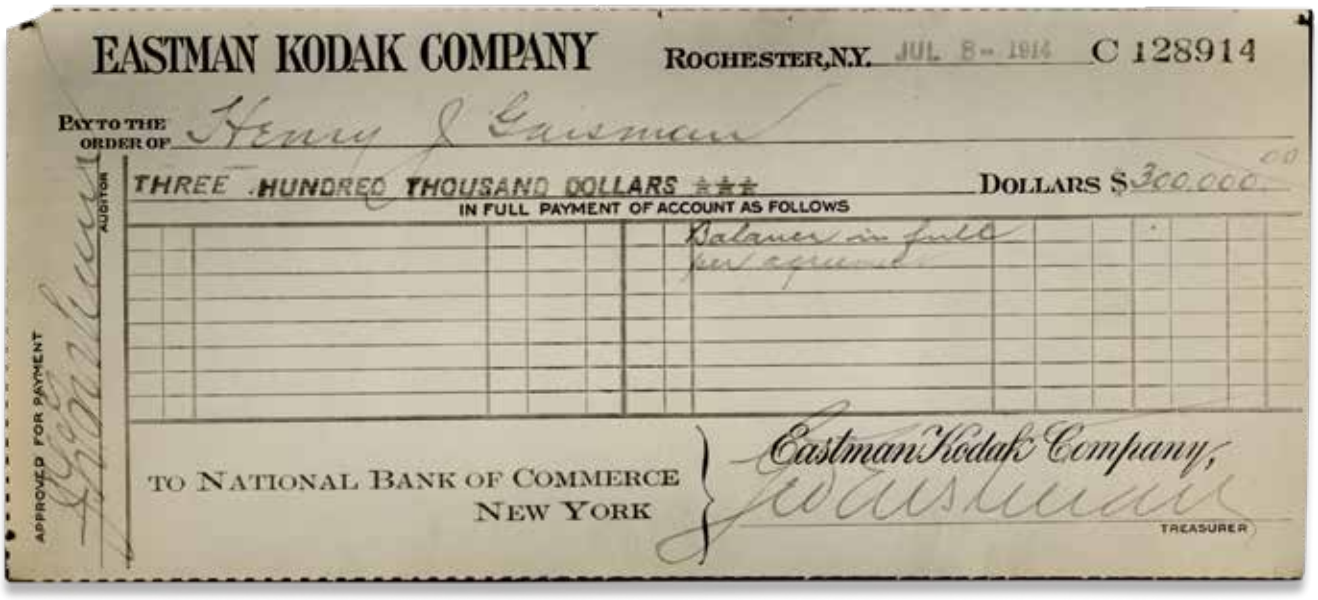

Figure 3: Circa 1914 photograph of Henry Jacques Gaisman with two Kodak "Autographic" No. 3A cameras and film box and wooden spools. Gaisman is demonstrating writing on the film backing through the small trap door on the back of the camera. [Collection of the author]

ranging from simple box Brownies to complex professional models with coupled rangefinders and high-quality lenses. In 1914, Kodak introduced a line of "Autographic" cameras, which enabled the photographer to write a brief notation on the negative that would appear on the edge of the photographs or postcards printed from that negative.

The "Autographic" capability was invented by Henry Jacques Gaisman [Figure 1]. Gaisman was an inveterate inventor, filing 39 patents in the United States and six in Canada. His first patent was filed with co-inventor Ferdinand Blun in 1895 for an improved waist belt. In 1897, Gaisman filed a patent for a further improvement in waist belts, with a series of hooks and fastening devices to minimize creases and wrinkles. Over the next 20 years, Gaisman filed over 40 patents, ranging from designs for suspenders and elastic cloth to razor blades, strops, and safety razors. Sale of his patents to the Auto Strop Safety Razor Company, subsequent legal battles against the Gillette Razor Company for infringement, and the eventual settlement through a merger of the two companies made Gaisman a wealthy man. (His estate in Westchester, New York, is now Westchester Community College, and his Hartsdale estate is now a nature preserve.)

Gaisman's first patent related to photography was filed by the Eastman Kodak Company on March 12, 1912. It was for a method to "provide improved means for causing the desired designations to be photographed upon a negative plate, or film, such as the name, initials, date, title of object photographed, etc." and included "any member or device such, as glass, celluloid, paper, cloth, or other objects for carrying or containing an emulsion or coating which, when exposed to actinic light by projection of the image as in the use of a lens or by contact as in the common practice of printing by photography." The patent, number 1,359,245, was awarded November 6, 1920.[1]

The Eastman Kodak Company apparently thought Gaisman's invention would help differentiate their cameras

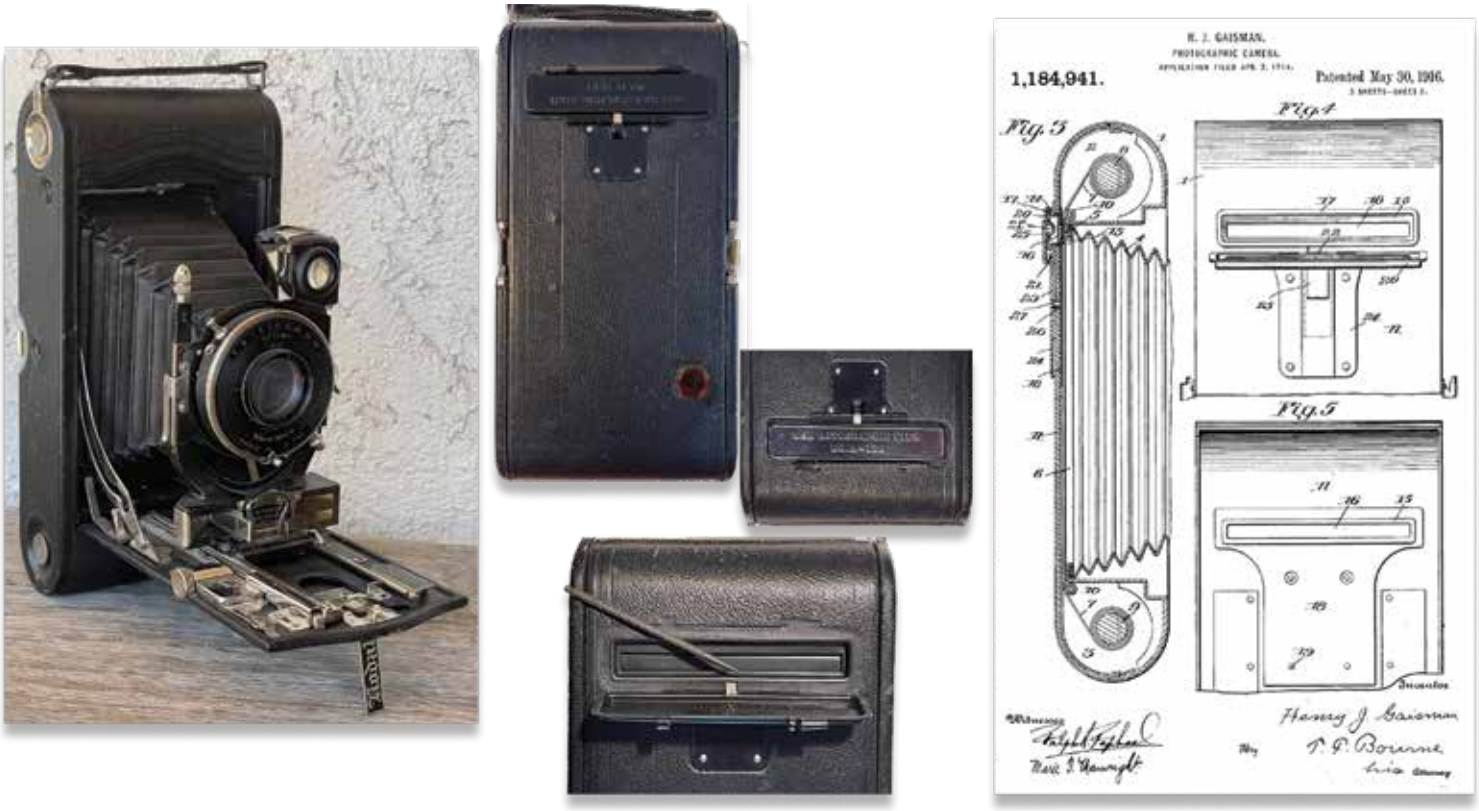

Figure 4: Example of a ca.1915 Kodak Autographic Special 3A with coupled rangefinder that made 6-3 ¼" x 5 ½" postcard format negatives on No. 122 roll film. Details of the back show the trap door and stylus in bracket, and the open autographic door for access to paper backing of the film and stylus. With a reproduction of the 1916 patent for the autographic feature. [Collection of the author]

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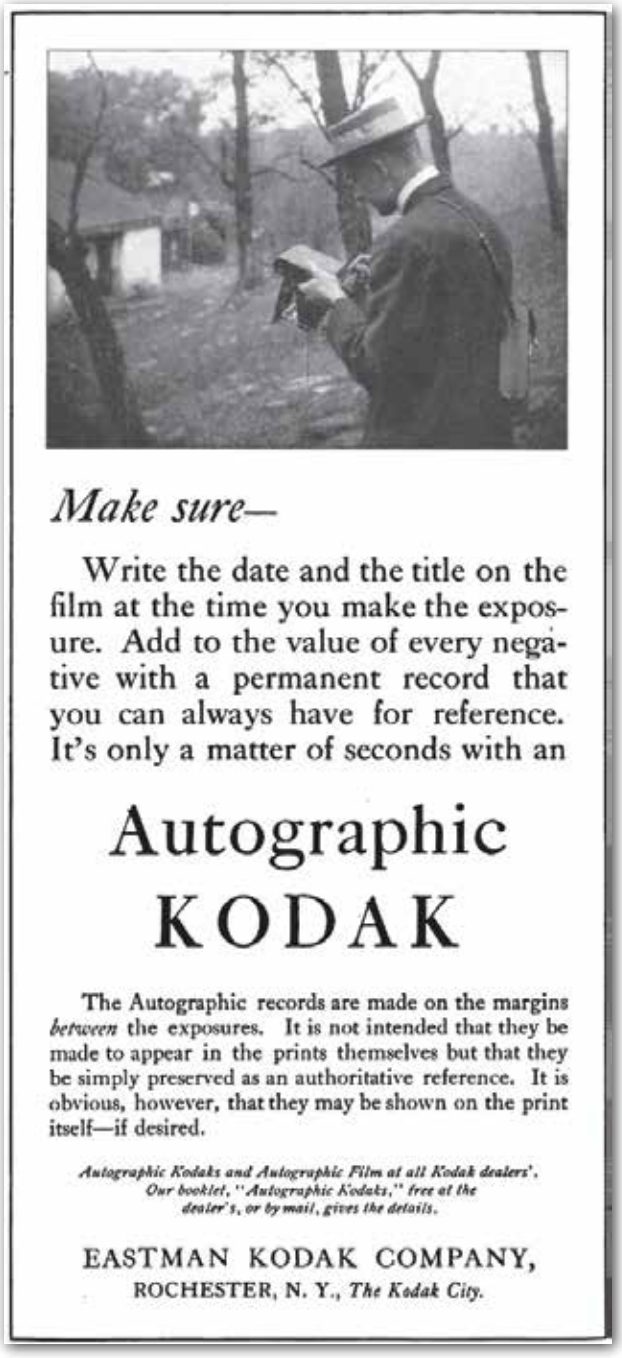


Figure 5: 1915 advertisement for the Autographic Kodak camera.

from those of their competitors, foster sales of new cameras and film, and engage new amateur photographers. Kodak purchased Gaisman's camera-related patents in 1914 for $300,000 (about $9,100,000 today). [Figure 2].

Kodak Autographic cameras had a small trap door on the back of the camera and a bracket holding a removable decorated metal stylus. When the door was opened, the photographer could make notes on the paper backing of the film. These were transferred onto the film itself through a thin layer of carbon paper that prevented exposure of the printed lines. [Figure 3]. When the film was developed and printed, the notes appeared as white writing on a black background on the edge of the image. Unlike most handwritten notations made with India ink on the negative, which often include awkward or reversed letters, the Autographic produced correctly-oriented notations. More than half a million of Kodak's Autographic Brownie 120 cameras are estimated to have sold between 1915 and 1926.

Autographic film that was produced in several sizes designated with an "A": A116 (2 ½ x 4 ¼), A118 (3 ¼ x 4 ¼), A120 (2 ¼ x 3 ¼), A122 3 ¼ x 5 ½), A123 (4 x 5), A126 (4 ¼ x 6 ½), A127 (1 5/8 x 2 ½), and A130 (2 7/8 x 4 7/8). [Figure 6]. In addition to fueling the expanding amateur photographic market, many of these cameras were used to produce negatives that were printed as photographic postcards.

Examples of Kodak Autographic Postcards – Roscoe Arbuckle Entertaining the Troops

Three real photo postcards probably produced with a Kodak Autographic 3A camera show silent film star Roscoe (later known as "Fatty") Arbuckle. [Figure 7].

Roscoe began his career in Bisbee, Arizona in 1909 as a vaudeville performer at the Orpheum Theater. He was part of the musical and slapstick comedy team "Reed & Arbuckle." Roscoe and Minta Durfee, his wife, left Bisbee later that year to pursue opportunities in the larger entertainment industry in Los Angeles. Although recognized as a talented singer by Enrico Caruso, who encouraged him to pursue that career, Roscoe chose to remain a vaudevillian. After a few more years on the circuit, Arbuckle was discovered by Max Sennett, became one of the "Keystone Cops," and joined the burgeoning film industry in 1913.

These examples of Roscoe entertaining military troops were collected from different sources over several years and raise some interesting questions. Who are the troops pictured in the tableaux with Arbuckle? Were they photographed on the Mexican Border earlier in his career, or are these scenes related to the Great War?

Each postcard has a Roscoe Arbuckle signature on the right side of the image in what appears to be an example

Figure 6: Packaging of the Eastman "Autographique" film for 2A, size 2 ½" x 4 ¼" - made by Canadian Kodak Co. in Toronto, 1920.

Figure 7: Three real photographic postcards of Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle entertaining troops, location unknown, almost certainly taken with a Kodak Autographic Camera ca.1915 to 1917. [Collection of the author]

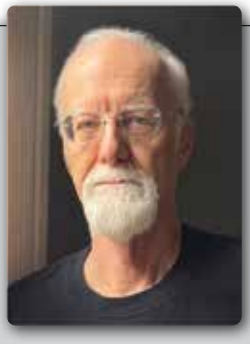
of an Autographic notation. The signatures are very similar and could possibly have been printed from a single signature to emulate the Autographic style.

Each image contains a four-digit number (4407, 4412, 4415) in the lower right corner. The lowest numbered image shows an apron-clad Roscoe washing canteen cups with a group of soldiers. The second shows Arbuckle goofing off and mugging to crack up a soldier standing in formation. In the final image, Roscoe, in a similar pose, has switched from military hat to cap, with a different group of soldiers and, apparently, in another location.

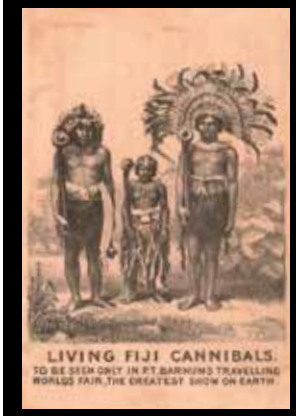
The likelihood that these were part of a series nourishes the hope that more examples will be found, and that additional information about the locations, events, and dates will eventually add to this story.

Footnote

[1.] Gaisman and Kodak filed several additional US patents related to the "Autographic" technique. (patent 1,230,399 filed 3/29/1912, awarded 6/19/1917; patent 1,249,612 – filed 3/29/1912, awarded 12/11/1917; patent 1,238,505 filed 5/6/1913, awarded 8/28/1917; patent 1,184,941 filed 4/3/1914 awarded 5/30/1916). Beginning in 1914, Gaisman and Kodak filed internationally in France, Great Britain, Germany, and Canada for worldwide protection of their intellectual property.



Jeremy Rowe has collected researched and written about historic photography for over 30 years. His collecting has focused on 19th and early 20th century photographs – ranging from daguerreotypes and cased images to mounted photographs, real photo postcards, and vernacular images with an emphasis on Arizona and the Southwest, Lower Manhattan, and the open-ended category of "images that strike me." Jeremy has curated exhibitions and served on the boards of the Daguerreian Society, National Stereoscopic Association, Daniel Nagrin Film, Theater and Dance Foundation, In Focus, and Ephemera Society of America. He is currently working with the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs to establish a National Stereoscopic Research Collection and Research Fellowship. He has written numerous publications about historic photography, including *Arizona Photographers 1865 – 1920 a History and Directory*, *Arizona Real Photo Postcards a History and Portfolio*, and *Arizona Stereographs 1865- 1930*. Jeremy is an Emeritus Professor at Arizona State University. He is currently a Senior Research Scientist at New York University and travels between New York City and Arizona.



VICTORIAN TRADE CARDS

John Kemler and Lynden Lyman are assembling a comprehensive database of all known Victorian-era trade cards of circuses, animal shows, dime museums, side shows, and the like. If you have such trade cards and would be willing to share scans of them so that they could be included (with attribution) in the database, we would appreciate hearing from you.

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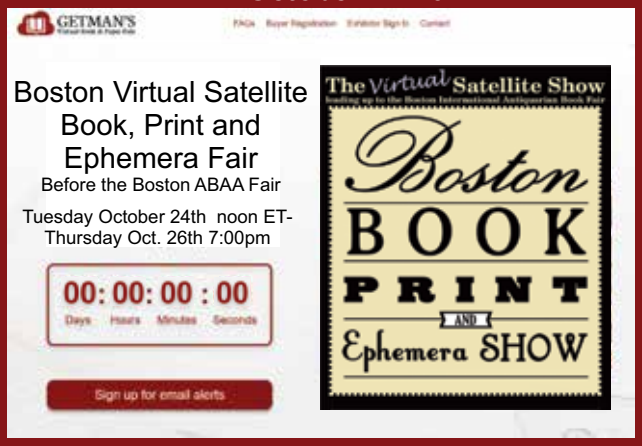

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