

# THE EPHEMERA JOURNAL

VOLUME 27, NUMBER 1

SEPTEMBER 2024

## The Use of Color in the English Suffrage Movement

KENNETH FLOREY

Many of the English organizations dedicated to promoting women's suffrage conveyed their ideology not only through words and actions, but also by careful attention to the symbolic language and aesthetic appeal of their programs, posters, banners, leaflets, and other ephemera. Each major suffrage group—and many minor ones—had a distinctive set of official colors that they imbued with meaning to help turn public sympathy to the righteousness of their cause.

The first suffrage group to rely extensively on a color scheme for campaign purposes was the National Union of Women Suffrage Societies (NUWSS), founded in 1897 as a

coalition of smaller parties. The largest of all of the suffrage societies in the United Kingdom, the NUWSS had an estimated 40,000 members at its peak. The organization was extremely active, but always maintained that the vote could and should be obtained through “constitutional” methods rather than by violent or destructive acts. At several of its rallies, members held up signs proclaiming that they were “law abiding suffragists.” This distinguished them as something other than “suffragettes” – a term that was originally derisive, but had been defiantly adopted by the militants. As early as 1906, the NUWSS had adopted red and white as its colors, using them

*Continued on Page 4*

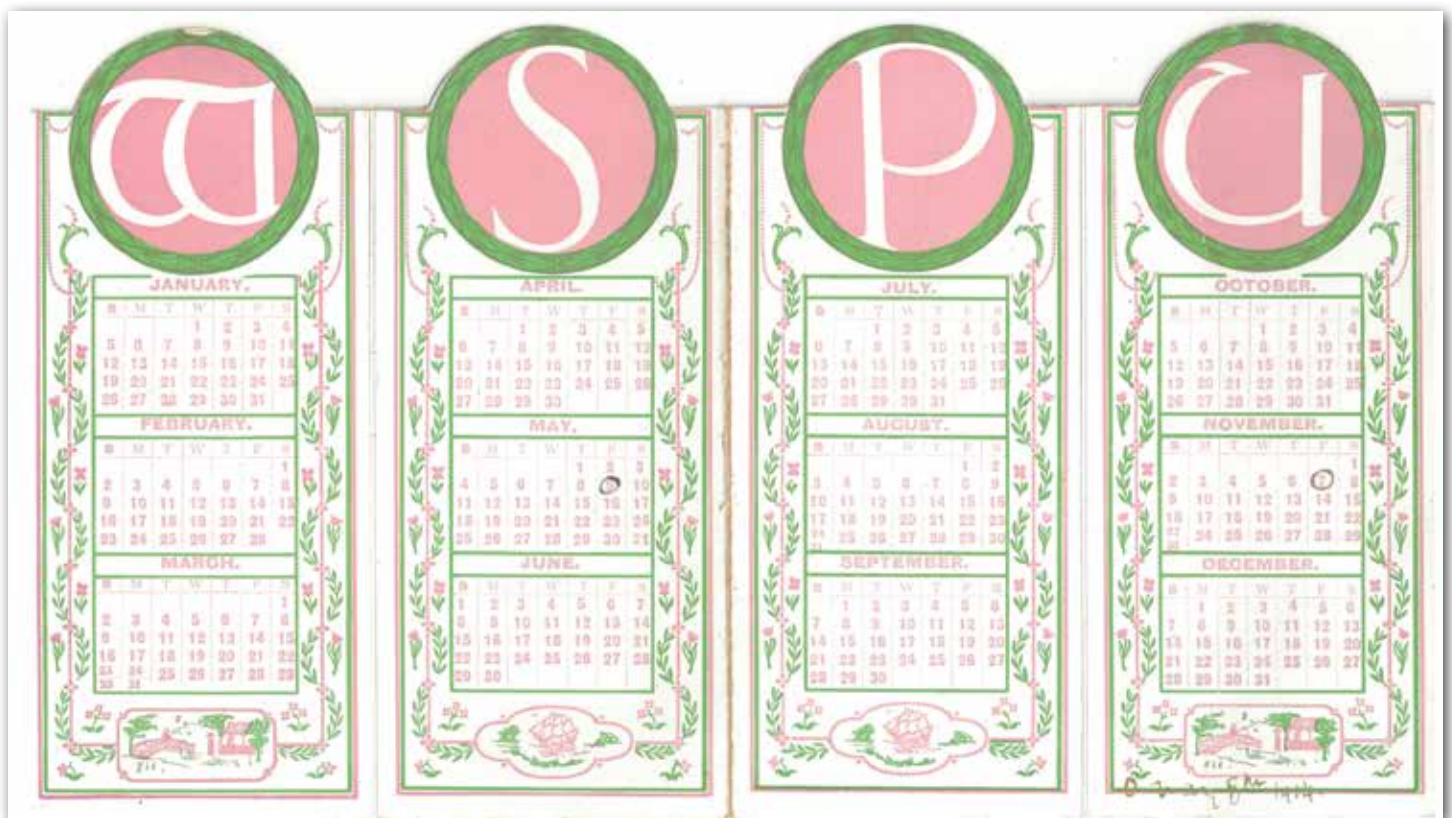


Figure 1. A 1913 paper calendar in the purple, green, and white of The Women's Social and Political Union. [all images from the collection of the author]

# The Ephemera Journal

The  
Ephemera  
Society  
of America

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**The Ephemera Society of America, Inc.  
P.O. Box 95**

**Cazenovia, NY 13035-0095**

Messages & Fax: 315-655-9139

Web Site: [www.ephemerasociety.org](http://www.ephemerasociety.org)

E-mail: [info@ephemerasociety.org](mailto:info@ephemerasociety.org)

Volume 27, Number 1, September 2024

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

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*Ephemera Journal* Editor:

Diane DeBlois

P.O. Box 477

West Sand Lake, NY 12196

[agatherin@yahoo.com](mailto:agatherin@yahoo.com)

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## *Members and Friends*

As summer gradually fades, I'm eagerly anticipating the ESA mid-year meeting this fall. We're thrilled to gather in the vibrant French Quarter of New Orleans. Although we initially faced some scheduling challenges due to a Taylor Swift concert that drove airfare prices to \$1000, we've now finalized our dates: **November 4-6**.

Our itinerary promises an engaging exploration of New Orleans' rich cultural landscape. We'll visit:

- **New Orleans Public Library** City Archives and Special Collections to view their Carnival, menus, and postcard collections.
- **Louisiana State Museums** for their jazz and visual arts exhibits.
- **Historic New Orleans** with highlights including Mardi Gras, the Battle of New Orleans, and Tennessee Williams.
- **Tulane University** Special Collections to see materials from the Louisiana Research Collection, University Archives, and the Hogan Archive of New Orleans Music and Jazz.
- **NOLA Sign Painting** with Anthony DelRosario.

ESA members are welcome to join all these activities. If you would like to register, please send an email to [info@ephemerasociety.org](mailto:info@ephemerasociety.org) by October 1st. A limited number of rooms have been reserved at the Omni Royal Orleans, located at 621 St. Louis Street. Please contact Julie Yates directly at 504-529-7020 or [jyates@omnihotels.com](mailto:jyates@omnihotels.com) by October 15, and be sure to mention that you are with The Ephemera Society of America.

I'm also pleased to announce that the ESA has partnered with the Clements Library at the University of Michigan to offer the Ephemera Society of America Fellowship. The 2024-25 fellowship recipient is Alexandra Cade, a PhD candidate in History at the University of Delaware. Her research will explore "Schottische at the Spa; Waltz at the Waterfall: Sensory Performance of National Identity in Nineteenth-Century American Tourism." While her research is set to begin early next year, the Emerging Scholars Committee is arranging an interview with Alexandra later this September, and we look forward to sharing more details in an upcoming issue of the eNews.

Finally, I want to acknowledge the passing of longtime ESA member and founder Bill Mobley. His contributions to our society were immense, and he will be deeply missed. Please see the article on the following page to read more about Bill's many accomplishments.



David Lilburne, President

**Article submissions are welcome**, and are subject to peer review. No more than 3,000 words and no more than ten images. Contact: [agatherin@yahoo.com](mailto:agatherin@yahoo.com).

## William Frost Mobley 1944-2024



Carol and Bill Mobley in their Colorado 'ephemera room'

Bill's phobias kept him out of caves, off airplanes, and away from microphones, but he was fearless when it came to ephemera. In the late 1960s, barely out of the Air Force, he launched a peripatetic career as an antiquarian book dealer and soon was specializing in what was then called Americana. He met his first wife - and great collaborator - Emily Davis at the 1st Cambridge [MA] Antiquarian Book Fair, Hallowe'en 1976. Bill then worked for and was mentored by two of the 'greats' in ephemera: Sam Murray of his hometown of Wilbraham MA, and Rocky Gardiner of Stamford

CT — both of whom had joined the Ephemera Society (Great Britain) in 1975.

A box on page 24 provides the founding narrative of our Society, with Bill leading the thrust for a "top of the line" opening event. He decided in 1980 to invest in a well-researched and nicely-printed catalog: *Superlative Selection of American Nineteenth-Century Historical and Advertising Broadsides*, which he followed with two others: *A Visual History of Trades and Professions*, and *An American Enterprise - A Fully Illustrated Catalog with Over 1250 Items* [Trade Cards, Advertising, Ephemera] — all three have continued to be valuable references.

Bill and Emily filled every Society role, including handling all the printing and mailing of publications, starting in 1981. They also created roles: Bill was always on the lookout for reference works that touched on ephemera - and for many years he and Emily ran a Society bookstore through mail order and at fairs. Bill promoted partnering with major institutions for conferences apart from the annual fair — the first in 1991 at The Strong Museum in Rochester NY and subsequent ones at The American Antiquarian Society, Winterthur, Colonial Williamsburg, and The Clements Library.

From the beginning, Bill worked with Al Malpa at staging and sharing Society events. In 1982, Bill joined Brian Riba in the ephemera auction world. In 1994 he encouraged Russ Mascieri and Dave Cheadle in the founding of the Trade Card Collector's Association, and encouraged Barbara Rusch to found The Ephemera Society of Canada.

Bill styled himself a Chocolate Historian when writing the foreword to Linda K. Fuller's 1994 *Chocolate Fads, Folklore and Fantasies*. His and Emily's enthusiastic collecting of chocolate ephemera led to a presentation at Mohonk Mountain House which in turn led to Bill's helping to organize Victorian-themed holidays there - with several Society members participating, including Phil Jones and John Grossman.

When Bill relocated to Colorado in 1996, his new wife and collaborator, Carol Teckenbrock, was an ephemera neophyte, but that soon changed. The most active paper collectors in the area focused on postcards, and the Mobleys began exhibiting at postcard fairs. Since 2016, Carol has been the show promoter for the Denver Postcard and Paper Show held three times a year and is currently chairs the Rocky Mountain Book and Paper Fair. Bill and Carol established an on-line ephemera store, and their home became a center for good ephemera scouting and camaraderie.

Bill's ill health the last several years curtailed his travel, but not his telephone ephemera network. Bill wished for no memorial service; he asked that contributions be made in his name to the Ephemera Society of America. Bill's own contribution will be the several volumes of beautifully-crafted scrapbooks containing all the first Society publications that Carol will bring these to Ephemera 45. Bill's ashes are interred at Fort Logan National Cemetery; apart from dates, his tombstone reads, simply, "EPHEMERIST".

## In this Issue...

Writing an obituary for a founding member reminds me of the reach of our organization: the lead article is by **Ken Florey**, one of our earliest academic collectors and former Board of Directors member. His passion for collecting and researching the global history of **woman's suffrage** has inspired several of generations of students.

Perhaps our farthest-flung member is **Tom Topol**, whose own **passport** has taken him to a home in Thailand.

**Donald-Brian Johnson** writes for a number of American collector publications from a home base in Omaha, Nebraska, and introduces us to the back-story of a historic **tiny house** in Iowa.

One of our Board members met **David Kennerly** at a Grolier Club event and realized that his collection of **gay club flyers** (and his new book) was prime 20th century ephemera fodder for our expanding membership demographic.

—Diane DeBlois, editor



Figure 2. NUWSS badges, sticker, and a pamphlet in the organization's official colors.

to decorate banners for demonstrations in 1907 and 1908. By 1909, however, the emerging success of more militant suffrage organizations led NUWSS leaders to aim for a more distinctive presence by adding green to the mix.

In the November 1909 issue of the NUWSS's journal, *The Common Cause*, Helen Fraser wrote enthusiastically about the new color scheme: "Every member can help to ensure that 20,000 red, white, and green badges and ribbons all over the country are being stared at, being talked about, are bringing in more and more supporters every day.... Let us put forth our greatest endeavors to have the colours known everywhere."<sup>1</sup> (Figure 2) In a follow-up article by A.M. Allen in the journal on May 26, 1910, the colors were interpreted for the first time. Noting that red, white, and green were also the colors of Garibaldi and Italian nationalism, Allen argued that these colors were not "merely juxtaposed for the novice to distinguish our Union from another" but "already a living unity with a great significance and a glorious history, for they have already served as the symbol of a battle for liberty nobly fought

and won." Allen explained their significance: "white, the serene faith in ideas which makes the soul divine; green, the perpetual re-florescence of hope and youth into the fruit of well-doing; red, the passion and blood of martyrs and of heroes."<sup>2</sup>

There may also have been a patriotic reason for using the full complement of green, white, and red, for they were the colors of the rose—a flower often used as a symbol for England itself. Indeed, the NUWSS adapted the stylized English rose as a graphic symbol on many of its badges. But despite concerted efforts by NUWSS leadership, red, white, and green never became widely recognized as representative of the suffrage cause. Perhaps because the law-abiding NUWSS lacked the notoriety and publicity achieved by its militant rival, the

Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU), its colors were often ignored.

The WSPU was formed on October 10, 1903, in Manchester at a small gathering of women led by Emmeline Pankhurst. Early members of the Union included Pankhurst's daughters: Sylvia, the celebrated artist of the movement, and Christabel, the firebrand who became its chief tactician and motivator after

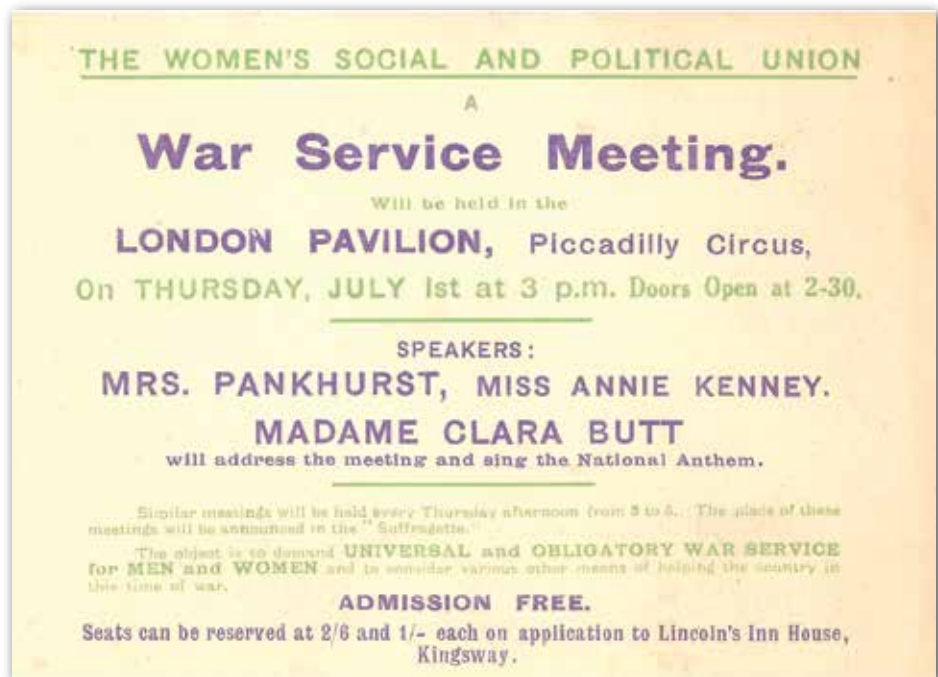


Figure 3. A 1915 invitation of The Women's Social and Political Union printed in their purple, green, and white.

prison hunger strikes caused Emmeline to develop health problems. Other prominent members were Emmeline and Frederick Pethick Lawrence, who jointly edited the WSPU's influential journal, *Votes for Women*. Frederick was a marketing genius who helped establish the Woman's Press, which sold and distributed suffrage materials—often in color—including booklets, leaflets, badges, and postcards.

The early WSPU may not have had official colors, and, if it did, those colors were probably the same red and white that served the NUWSS in its beginnings. Several WSPU flags and an early badge in red and white have survived. But in May 1908, Emmeline Pethick Lawrence announced a new official color scheme of purple, green, and white, which was to be used for the upcoming mass demonstration in Hyde Park. (Figures 1 and 3) She glossed the colors as white for purity, green for hope, and purple for dignity or the royal blood that ran through the veins of every true suffragist. It is unknown how many of the WSPU supporters were aware of the meaning attached to each color, but the pattern quickly became embedded in the general public's perception of the militant suffrage movement.

The program for the Hyde Park demonstration announced that there would be 700 banners in green, white, and purple, bearing such slogans as "Rise, Go Forth and Conquer," "Taxation Without Representation is Tyranny," and "Working Women Demand the Vote."<sup>3</sup> Rally organizers and platform

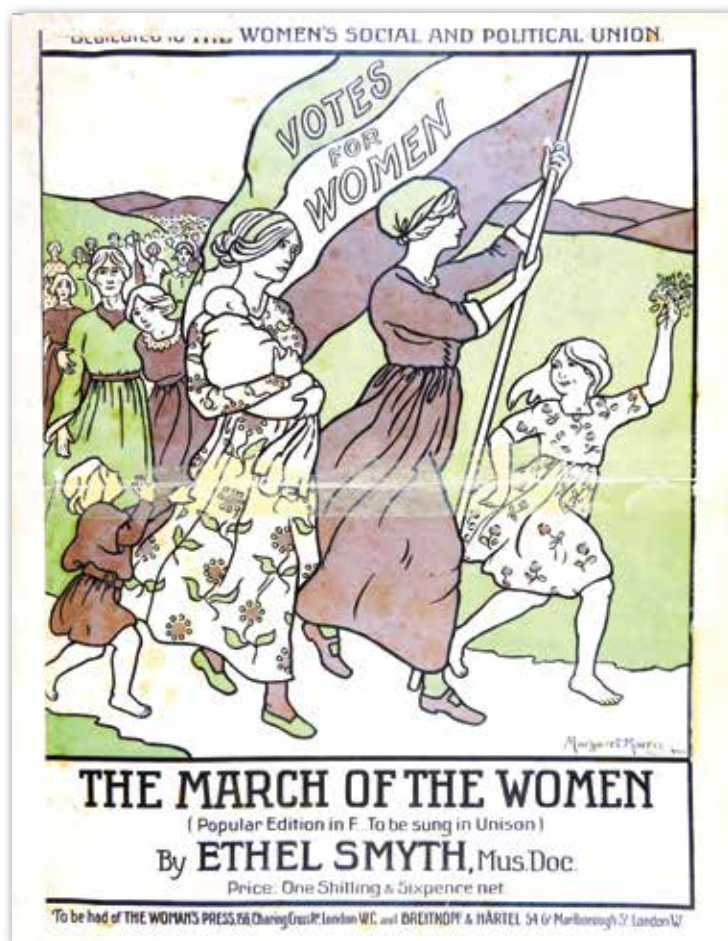


Figure 4. Sheet music of a 1911 composition by Ethel Smyth, illustrated by Margaret Morris. From her cell in Holloway, Smyth purportedly conducted a group of suffragette prisoners in the courtyard singing her song using a toothbrush instead of a baton.

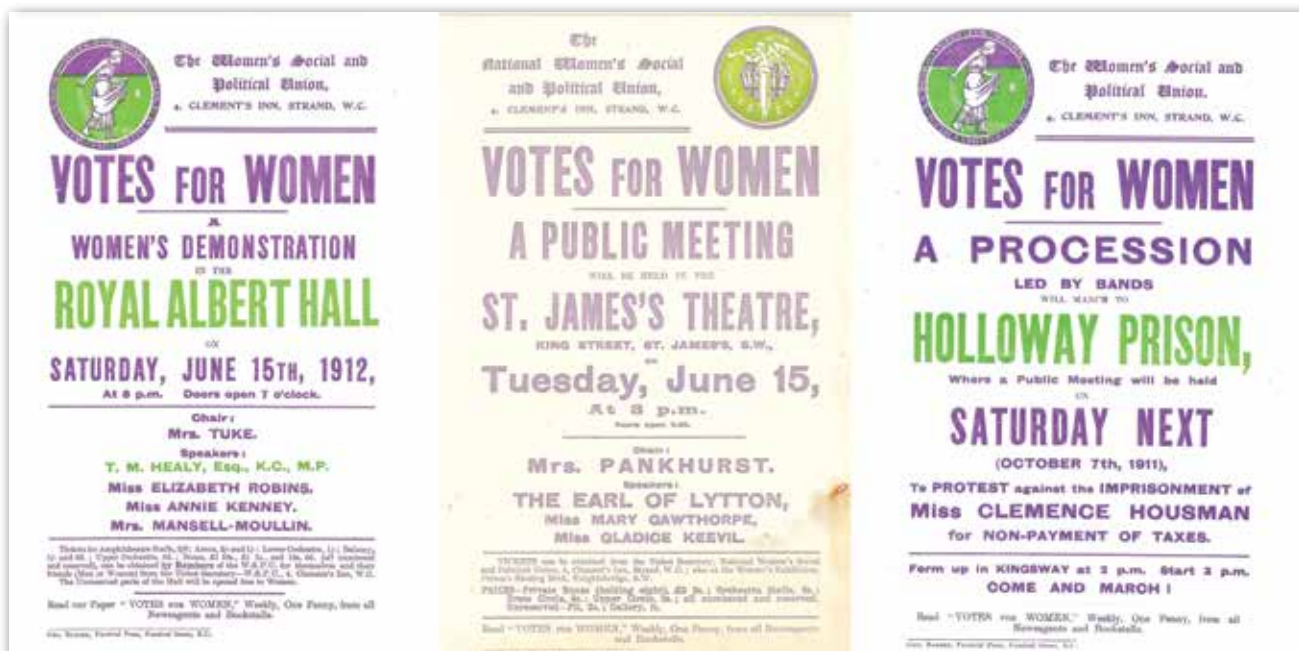


Figure 5. Three flyers 1912, 1915, 1911, in the colors featuring logos by Sylvia Pankhurst.



Figure 6. Illuminated manuscript designed by Sylvia Pankhurst for released prisoner Ellison Gibb.

speakers all wore special ribbons in the colors; printed material, official or otherwise, was done up in the colors, as was souvenir memorabilia, including illustrated paper napkins printed by Sarah Burgess, a dealer in trophies and souvenirs.

Christabel Pankhurst lauded the success of the new color scheme in an article for *Votes for Women* in May 1909, and promoted it for the upcoming suffrage exhibition at the Prince's Skating Rink in Knightsbridge, London, where there would be a myriad of items in the colors for sale. She urged women to buy and wear the colors, so that “every member of the union will become an advertiser for the exhibition,” and help visitors to “appreciate for the first time the strength of the woman’s movement.”<sup>4</sup>

Recently, there has arisen a myth that one of the official colors was not purple but violet, and that the resultant acronym of GWV, which allegedly stood for “Give Women the Vote,” was embedded surreptitiously in objects worn by women who wanted to keep their support secret from hostile husbands and relations. Apart from misconstruing Emmeline Pethick Lawrence’s original symbolism, such an interpretation flies in the face of WSPU’s intent to publicize the suffrage movement, with members regularly urged to “wear the colors” to promote its widespread recognition.

The WSPU was a militant organization from the start. Early on, Union sympathizers broke windows, threw rocks, and accosted members of Parliament. As the campaign waged on, the WSPU encouraged increasingly violent activities, particularly after 1912 when a third Conciliation Bill, which would have granted some women the right to the ballot, was voted down by the House of Commons. These later militant activities included destruction of golf courses, slashing of classic paintings in museums, setting fire to mail boxes, and bombings and arson attacks on public buildings, including churches, hotels, sports stadiums, and railroad stations. The destruction became so prevalent that purple, green, and white became linked in public perception not only with the violence of the WSPU, but with the entire suffrage movement. (Figure 4) Anti-suffrage ephemera of the period—including postcards, sheet music, and ceramic figures—simply had to use the WSPU color scheme (with



Figure 7. A bevy of buttons and badges, all in the official colors of their respective organizations.

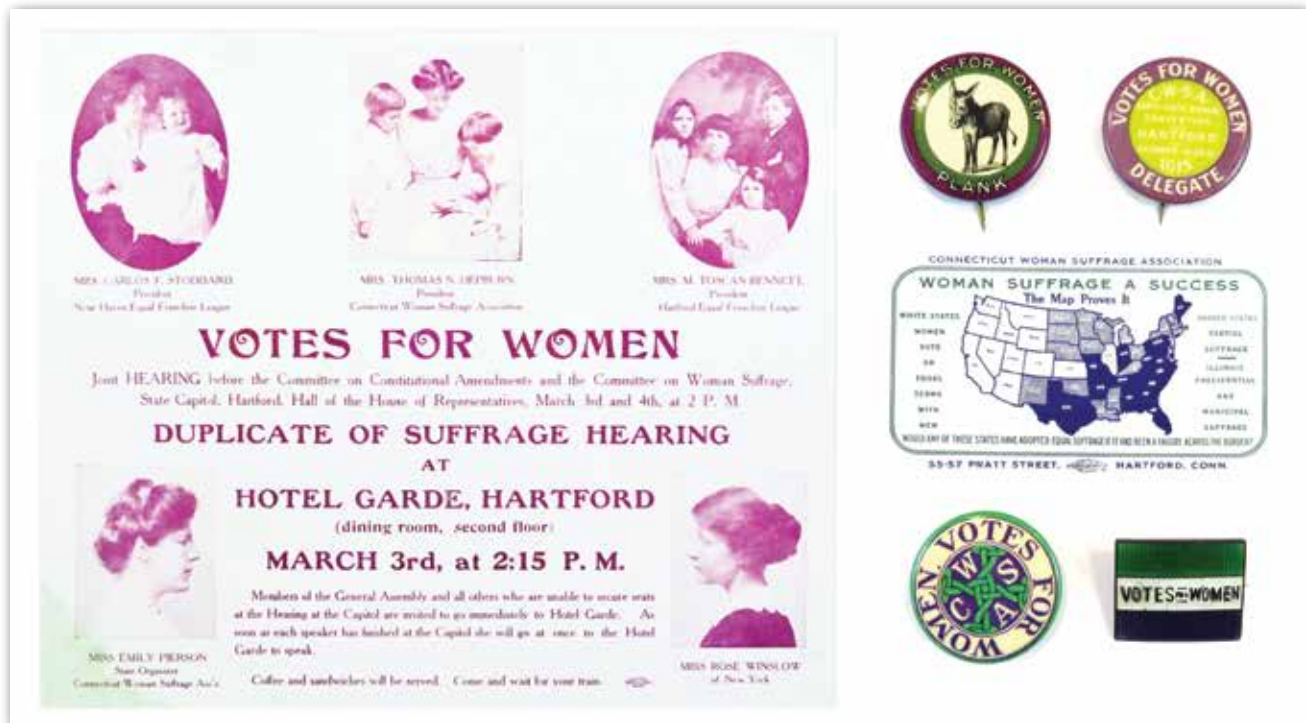


Figure 8. Buttons and 1911 poster from the Connecticut Woman Suffrage Association in WSPU-influenced colors. Pictured at the top center is Katharine Hepburn, mother of the actress, along with two of her children, including Katharine.

no mention of “suffrage”) for people to understand its intent. The NUWSS tried its best to disassociate itself from the violence, fearing that it would severely hurt the cause.

Sylvia Pankhurst helped spread the popularity of the WSPU colors through her artwork. She was known particularly for her logos: one shows a woman stepping over her broken chains as she emerges from prison, another depicts an allegorical figure as trumpeter of the coming age, and a third shows a woman sowing the seeds of suffrage. These logos were employed extensively on buttons and badges, pamphlets, china, engraved invitations, greeting cards, book covers, and promotional stickers. Figure 5 shows examples from WSPU flyers, which, printed in the colors, transformed the traditional black and white leaflet into a work of art.

Sylvia also designed the famous “Illuminated Manuscript” that was given to all WSPU prisoners upon their release from Holloway Prison. (Figure 6) It featured a crest at the top picturing three heraldic angels, two of whom are blowing trumpets, while the third displays a banner of freedom. Around the margins the colors are used in a floral design, along with symbols of suffrage imprisonment. Each copy included the recipient’s name (hand lettered), along with Emmeline Pankhurst’s signature.

On a visit to England Anna Howard Shaw, who served for a time as President of the National American Woman Suffrage Association, was impressed by how effectively the WSPU was able to promote its colors: “The colors of Mrs. Pankhurst’s party, purple, white, and green, are so popular in London that enterprising

shopkeepers are adapting them for their advertisements. You see a purple, white, and green placard, you see [a display of] ‘Father’s Rolled Barley,’ or of the newest thing in soap’.”<sup>5</sup>

Other suffrage organizations in England had their own official colors. (Figure 7) These include the Women’s Freedom League (green, white, and gold), the Actresses’ Franchise League (pink and green), the Church League for Women Suffrage (yellow or gold and white), the Tax Resistance League (black, white, and gray), the Men’s League for Women Suffrage (black and gold), the Catholic Women’s Suffrage Society (pale blue, white, and gold), and the Jewish League for Women Suffrage (purple, white, and celestial blue). When Frederick and Emmeline Pethick Lawrence were expelled from the WSPU in 1912 for opposing some of the more militant actions favored by the Pankhursts, they formed their own group, the Votes for Women Fellowship. Contemplating a new color scheme, Frederick complained that “almost every other color combination had been adopted.”<sup>6</sup> They finally settled on white, purple, and red, borrowing from both the WSPU and the NUWSS. It is not known how many of these organizations attached symbolic significance to their colors. A few certainly did, but the small size of some groups inhibited their ability to effectively promote their colors’ meaning.

Societies opposed to suffrage also had their official colors; at times their combinations were unfortunate. Writing in the American suffrage publication *The Woman’s Journal*, Alice Stone Blackwell reported that English suffragists were quick to ridicule the

continued from page 7

black and blue colors of the Anti-Suffrage League. One activist remarked that the League's choice was: "appropriate since they are the color of bruises, and all the men who beat their wives are opposed to votes for women."<sup>7</sup>

After a failed state campaign in Kansas in 1867, the color most associated with suffrage in America was yellow. Suffragist supporters from the East noticed the use of the bright yellow sunflower (Kansas' State flower) to promote the cause. They soon incorporated yellow into their home campaigns, where it appeared on ribbons, sashes, banners and various printed materials. The National American Woman Suffrage Association sometimes decorated its convention halls with a profusion of yellow daffodils in remembrance of the Kansas campaign.

American suffrage organizations that wanted to exhibit a more militant image opted to forgo yellow in favor of the WSPU color scheme. Chief among these was Harriot Stanton Blatch's New York-based Women's Political Union (WPU), which not only modeled its name on that of the WSPU, but also adopted the English organization's slogan of "Deeds, Not Words," and its color scheme. Blatch, of course, was the daughter of

Elizabeth Cady Stanton. The colors made their way north, where they were adopted by the Connecticut Woman Suffrage Association when Katharine Houghton Hepburn (mother of the actress) was its president. (Figure 8) They also appeared on ephemera and memorabilia of the Just Government League, formed in 1909 in Maryland by Hepburn's sister, Edith Houghton Hooker. None of these groups, however, actively promoted destruction of property in the fashion of the English WSPU, and it appears that the use of purple, green, and white was intended to suggest *assertive* rather than violent behavior.

Alice Paul, who founded the Congressional Union (which later morphed into the National Woman's Party and picketed the White House during World War I), had campaigned in England for a time with the WSPU and was imprisoned as a result. When she returned to America, she modified her organization's color combination to purple, gold (yellow), and white. In an NWP newsletter, the revised colors were interpreted as follows: "Purple is the color of loyalty, constancy to purpose, unswerving steadfastness to a cause. White, the emblem of purity, symbolizes the quality of our purpose; and gold, the color of light



Figure 9. "Political Help." Winner of the 1907 NUWSS/Artists' Suffrage League poster competition. Designed by Dora Mason Coates.



Figure 10. "The Modern Inquisitor." Design of force feeding of a suffrage prisoner done by "A Patriot" (Alfred Pearse) and published by the WSPU for the January 1910 General Election.

and life, is as the torch that guides our purpose, pure and unswerving."<sup>8</sup>

A few final words about color and the English suffrage movement should be given to two groups of women artists, the Artists' Suffrage League (ASL) and the Suffrage Atelier. The ASL was founded in 1907 by Mary Loundes. It does not appear to have a formal structure, and no membership lists are known. Nevertheless, it helped to support the suffrage campaign by encouraging female professional artists to donate their work in support of the cause. League members embroidered banners and created colorful designs for large posters and Christmas cards. They also illustrated, albeit in black and white, a series of propaganda postcards.

The Suffrage Atelier was an artists' collective formed in February 1909 by Laurence and Clemence Housman. (Figure 9) Although its artistic output was theoretically available for distribution by all suffrage organizations, in practice the Atelier had a loose affiliation with the Women's Freedom League (just as the ASL did with the NUWSS). The Atelier owned a handpress, and much of its work was wood block prints or linocuts.

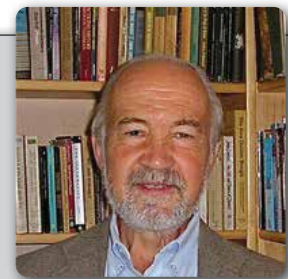
Some of its materials, such as posters, were printed in black and white, but some hand-coloring was done. The Atelier encouraged amateurs to take part, hoping to aid enterprising young women in developing a profession. Unlike the ASL, the Atelier had a formal constitution and permitted its members to take a percentage of the profits from the sale of their work.

In her study on the imagery of the English suffrage campaign from 1907-1914, *The Spectacle of Women*, Lisa Tickner estimates that there are approximately 57 surviving posters from both groups. In addition, the WSPU produced at least another nine.<sup>9</sup> (Figure 10) Although many of these posters depict specific issues and events in English suffrage history, excess pieces were sometimes sold to American groups, who displayed them in their headquarters or sold them to supporters. These posters were not painted in any official color scheme. Their size, abundant use of color, and variety did set them apart from American posters, most of which (except for the contributions of Rose O'Neill, creator of the Kewpie Doll) tended to be small, limited in graphic sensibility, and lacking in color. It is the employment of color—whether for aesthetic or symbolic purposes—that makes the art and artistry of the English movement so appealing.

#### Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Helen Fraser, untitled article in *The Common Cause*, 25 Nov. 1909, p. 433.
- <sup>2</sup> A. M. Allen, "The Red, White, and Green." *The Common Cause* 26 May 1910, p. 99.
- <sup>3</sup> Program: *Votes for Women—Suffragettes Demonstration in Hyde Park, Sunday, June 21<sup>st</sup>, 1908*, pp 3-4.
- <sup>4</sup> Christabel Pankhurst, "The Political Importance of the Colours." *Votes for Women* 7 May 1909, p. 514.
- <sup>5</sup> Anna Howard Shaw, "Color and Ginger." *Woman's Journal* 30 Aug. 1910, p. 138.
- <sup>6</sup> Frederick Pethick Lawrence, untitled article in *Votes for Women* 15 Nov. 1912, p. 98.
- <sup>7</sup> Alice Stone Blackwell, "Anti-Suffrage Colors," *Woman's Journal* 16 Nov. 1912, p. 364.
- <sup>8</sup> It is not known why gold was substituted for the green of the WSPU.
- <sup>9</sup> Lisa Tickner, *The Spectacle of Women* (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), pp. 250-53.

**Dr. Kenneth Florey** is Professor Emeritus in English at Southern Connecticut State University. He has collected suffrage memorabilia for many years and has published two books and several scholarly articles on the subject. He edits an on-line newsletter about suffrage artifacts that is free to any Ephemera Society member who contacts him at [kennethflorey@gmail.com](mailto:kennethflorey@gmail.com).



# Passport Photographs - A Brief History

TOM TOPOL

In 1826, Nicéphore Niépce managed to snap the very first camera photo. He used a sheet of pewter coated with a sticky substance (bitumen), and it took eight hours to capture the image: the view from his workspace in Saint-Loup-de-Varennes, France. This photo, known as the Niépce Heliograph, is considered the earliest photo ever taken with a camera.

It would take another sixty years for the first photo to appear on a passport (Figure 1) and many decades more before guidelines for such photos were standardized.

In 1915, the passport photo was officially introduced as a wartime measure. Thereafter, it became mandatory. Prior to adding a photo, passports had always included a physical description of the bearer, giving details on several characteristics, such as face, nose, mouth, ears, eyes, and even teeth. Only the British refused to put a physical description on their travel documents as, according to Foreign Secretary, Lord Palmerston, it was considered degrading and offensive.

The United States introduced passport requirements on December 21, 1914. For the first time, Department of State regulations required a photograph to be submitted with the application. Applicants were also required to submit birth or naturalization certificates or previous passports. They had to disclose the countries to be visited and the purpose of the visit. Passports were valid only for those countries listed.

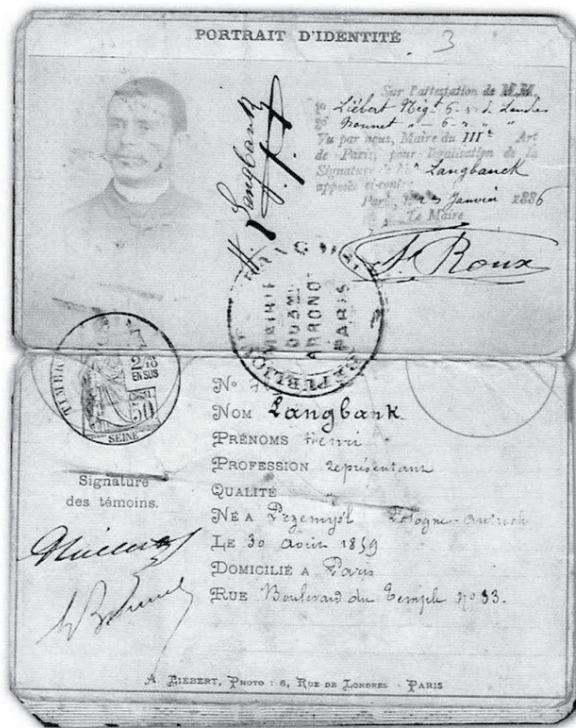


Figure 1. French Portrait d'Identité 1886. [all images from the author's collection]



Figure 2. Italy 1918, woman wearing a large hat.

At first, there were no rules; any photo was allowed as long as it fit on the passport page. Hence, we find passport photos of people wearing hats (Figure 2), sitting on park benches, and in full tennis regalia including a racket. A hunter posed with his rifle (Figure 3). People posed in uniform or national costume (Figure 4) and with their pets (Figure 5). By 1926, the rule of “full face, without a hat” was implemented in Great Britain, and the photo size was standardized.

Exceptions, however, were made: Lady Diana Cooper, Viscountess Norwich (29 August 1892 – 16 June 1986) was an English silent film actress and aristocrat who was a well-known social figure in London and Paris. Until the 1960s, Lady Diana's passport photo showed her as she looked in 1921. The photo (showing her costumed for an unidentified role) was originally published in an issue of *The Tatler*. In her 1960 memoir, she wrote: “The frontiers still let me through with that picture on my passport. When they won't, I'll stay at home.” (Figure 6)

The U.S. implemented stricter passport photo rules in the 1960s. The applicant was no longer permitted to smile. Another mark of progress was the switch from black and white to color toward the end of the 1970s, substantially increasing the value of the photograph for clarifying certain characteristics. (Figure 7) At the same time, people were starting to dress less formally for their passport photos; no longer did the official character of the document incentivize people to dress their best. In 2004, British travelers were ordered to adopt a neutral expression in their passport photographs to avoid

Figure 3. Germany 1916, hunter with his rifle and dog.



Figure 4. Japan 1934, woman in a kimono.



Figure 6. Photograph of Lady Diana Cooper used on her British passport until the 1960s.

Figure 5. Germany 1916, girl with her dog.





Figure 7. Andorra 1942, colorized photo.

confusing facial recognition scanners. According to a Home Office spokesman, “When the mouth is open it can make it difficult for facial recognition technology to work effectively.”

Prior to the second half of the twentieth century, international travel was a luxury and passports were issued primarily to the privileged and, by necessity, to immigrants. By the 1950s, travel was more accessible.

The widespread embrace of overseas tourism was responsible for a significant shift towards uniformity in passport documentation. The inception of coin-operated photo booths can be traced back to the 1880s, but the rise in their popularity during the burgeoning era of mass international travel played a pivotal role in shaping the standardization of passport photographs. It has been only in the last decades, with the U.S. requiring two identical photos, that the tradition of taking one’s passport photo in a photo booth has come to an end.

In the 21st century, printed photos are no longer laminated into the passport. Instead, the entire page/photo is generated digitally. This protects against fraud and forgery. Several security features - a hologram, watermark, and micro printing - protect the digital photo. (Figure 8)

The notion of a photograph as a tangible object with a past is vanishing. Photos are becoming artifacts of the print era, along with other ephemera. Who knows if passports as we know them will be around twenty years from now?



**Tom Topol’s** website [Passport-collector.com](https://www.passport-collector.com) offers a newsletter on passport history and collecting. Readers can sign up to receive the latest expert articles on the topic. Please make sure to use the correct link <https://www.passport-collector.com/>

Figure 8. Israel 2016-2016. When asked why Israel allowed Michael Afanasyev to appear in his passport photo wearing a colander on his head, Michael cited Israel’s legal protection of religious garb: “I indeed asserted that I am a believer in the Flying Spaghetti Monster and that the Colander is our religious headgear. It is serious, and a lot of fun, too. The thing is – unlike the Netherlands, for example, Israel does not have a set of



rules for headgear on passport photos. So if they refused me, they’d have to make a set of rules, and that would be rather difficult. In Israel, many men wear Jewish Kipa, religious women both Jewish and Muslim wear head scarfs, and some Orthodox Jewish women shave their heads and wear wigs. I imagine designing a set of rules that would allow them to wear whatever they wear and exclude my colander would be too difficult.”

# The Bregants: An American Dream in a Small Package

DONALD-BRIAN JOHNSON

In Council Bluffs, Iowa, there is a tiny house. Over a century old, it was built to meet the very specific needs and requests of two little people: vaudevillians Inez and Jean Bregant.

An accomplished singer and dancer since childhood, Inez Lewis (1887-1969) was ‘discovered’ at the age of 14, and was soon winning critical acclaim. (Figure 1) An early review in a publication for vaudeville bookers enthused: “In spite of the fact that she is only forty-one and one-half inches in height, and weighs only forty pounds, Inez carries herself like a little queen. Nature has endowed her with many personal charms. She is not only pretty of face but possesses a figure which, for proportions, would cause many of her big sisters to envy her. Besides these natural endowments, this little lady is bright, intelligent, vivacious and witty, and possesses conversational powers far above those of the average person. Her beauty and talents soon won for her a place in the front rank, and her popularity has increased with each season.”

Meanwhile, Austrian-born Jean (1869-1944) had been making a name for himself across Europe as a singing “character” comedian (Figure 2), before coming to the United States in 1904. Arriving in New York, he was quickly signed for the Keith & Proctor vaudeville show at Coney Island.

Coney Island was one of New York’s biggest entertainment draws in the early 1900s, and one of Coney Island’s must-sees was Dreamland’s “Midget City.” (Figure 3) Here, 300 vaudevillian little people posed as ordinary residents, going about their daily doings in a scaled-down metropolis. Officially called “Liliputia,” (a popular reference from *Gulliver’s Travels*,) the city was built to resemble Nuremberg, Germany at half scale. The tiny town, included its own opera house, where “Mrs. Gen. Tom Thumb and All The Liliputian Stars” were the headliners. Among those on the bill: Miss Jennie Quigley (“Famous Little Scottish Queen”); Oleo Oleson (“The Famous Swedish Midget”); Wm. Platt (“The American Beau Brummel”) and Inez Lewis (“The Miniature Lillian Russell”).

Inez and Jean met at Midget City, and were married on Christmas Day, 1905. (Figure 4) A news report described the event:

Liliputians Fell in Love While Playing at Coney Island and Wed. *Council Bluffs, IA, December 26, 1905* – “Inez Lewis of Council Bluffs, who is forty-two and one-half inches tall, and who weighs forty-five pounds, yesterday became the wife of Jean Bregant, an Austrian midget, forty-five inches tall and weighing



Figure 1. A promotional photograph of Inez Lewis in a Mikado role.

only sixty-six pounds. The romance, which culminated in the Christmas wedding, is full of interest. Both Inez Lewis and Jean Bregant were playing in vaudeville at Coney Island last summer. Curiously enough, they both were at the Midget City opera house, and it was not long before the acquaintance which sprung up between them became serious. The bride is only eighteen years old, while Mr. Bregant is thirty-five. The bride was born in Denver but has spent most of her life in the Bluffs. Her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Peter Lewis, are both of normal size, and so were their ancestors, so far as known. Miss Lewis is their only child. Jean Bregant, who was born in Styria, Austria, is also the only midget of his family. His parents are of normal size, and so are his brothers and sisters. He has been in vaudeville for fifteen years, in which time he has played in Berlin, St. Petersburg, Bucharest, Belgrade, Vienna, and all the

*continued on page 14*



principal European cities. He played in New York last summer, his first engagement in America. Mr. Bregant is a linguist. Besides his native Slav, he speaks English, French, and German.”

The newlyweds continued as performers, touring Europe in 1908 and 1914. Eventually, they moved to Inez’s home town of Council Bluffs and settled into a new career as grocers. Thanks to the generosity of Inez’s parents (who lived right next door), they also settled into a brand-new home: a made- to-order “tiny house.” A news article of the time called the one-bedroom Craftsman bungalow “one of the prettiest and most unique homes in the city.”

Set back from the street, the Bregant abode could easily be mistaken today for a child’s playhouse. (Figure 5) It is wedged between two towering neighbors—a three-story house on one side, and a two-story duplex on the other. Although miniature in size, its design is perfectly proportioned for the comfort of its original

*Figure 2. (left) A promotional card for Jean Bregant’s European career, highlighting his talents as a “character comic extraordinaire.” [All illustrations compliments of Preserve Council Bluffs; photograph restoration by Hank Kuhlmann]*

*Figure 3. (below) A postcard of the entrance to Midget City, Coney Island.*





Figure 4. A press photograph of the newly married couple.

owners. Reach for a light switch or a door knob, and you'll find it much lower than expected. The fireplace mantel, shoulder-height in most homes, reaches the average person's waist. In the dining room, a specially constructed buffet/hutch includes an interior mirror at the perfect height for Inez to adjust her hat (for a visitor of average height, it is better suited for adjusting one's belt.)

Not every item in the home was sized to the Bregants. As Inez noted in a 1959 interview, "Some people think I furnish my house entirely with small furniture. I don't. It would be foolish. I do quite a bit of entertaining, and all my friends are of 'normal' size."

The ex-vaudevillians lived contentedly in their made-to-order home, running their grocery store, and "keeping their hand in" with occasional performances at local events. And then they were "re-discovered."

Council Bluffs candy company John G. Woodward & Co. was known for its "pure sugar stick candy and real butterscotch," and famed for its Butter Brickle Bar. Occupying a full city block, the Woodward factory was, apart from the Railroad, the largest employer in Council Bluffs. At its busiest, circa 1920,

Woodward employed nearly 1,000 workers and sold 2 million pounds of candy annually.

One day, the Bregants stopped by the Woodward factory to replenish their candy supplies and encountered Mr. Woodward himself. Impressed by their charming personalities and show business background, Woodward offered the Bregants a new career opportunity— as promoters and demonstrators for Woodward Candy.

Billed as "the smallest salespeople in the world," the Bregants traveled a 20-state region, pleasing crowds with excerpts from their vaudeville act, and, of course, selling plenty of candy. (Figure 6) The advance ads proclaimed, "You'll be pleased to meet this captivating little couple. They're not only the smallest salespeople in the world, but the most clever. And, with each 10-cent Woodward package purchased, they present their souvenir picture." The souvenir card selection featured images of the twosome in various poses and settings, including scenes of them in their made-to-scale home. (Figure 7) Photo captions focused on the domestic, such as ("A Quiet Evening At Home," and "Mrs. Bregant In Her Model Kitchen").

As the "Candy Kids," Inez and Jean enjoyed great popularity and achieved financial security. Jean, who, as a young man had worried that his size would limit his options in life, was overjoyed. "In the United States," he said, "it is possible for anyone to get the opportunity to succeed. It is this fact that makes me think so well of this country."

After retirement, the Bregants settled comfortably into their tiny home, tooling around Council Bluffs in a size-adapted 1928 Buick Victoria. A favorite jaunt included a stop at a local drive-in for ice cream, then on to "Lookout Point" in Fairmount Park where the couple would enjoy their cones and take in the magnificent view, 1,250 feet up. (Figure 8)



Figure 5. A 2016 photograph of the Bregant's house in Council Bluffs.



Figure 6. On the road for Woodward: two Bregant souvenir cards promoting Woodward's "pure sugar stick candy and real butter scotch."



Figure 8. The Bregants in retirement, early 1940s.

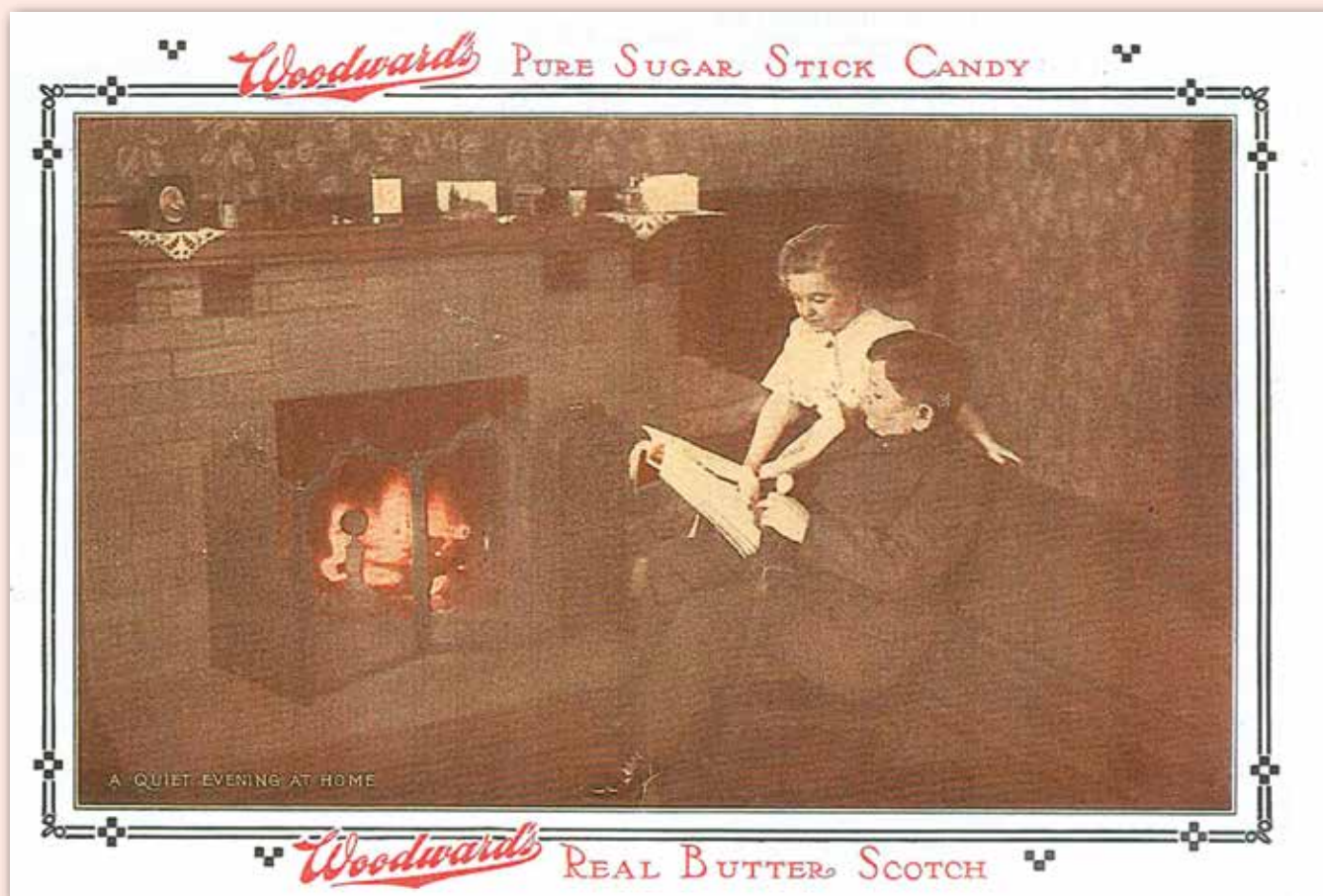


Figure 7. Woodward's Candy postcard, depicting the Bregants by their scaled-down fireplace. The caption: "A Quiet Evening At Home."



Figure 9. Artists depiction of the 1911 Dreamland fire on a souvenir postcard.

In 1911, betting on horse racing in New York had been outlawed and new incentives were needed to lure crowds who used to head for Dreamland after a trip to the nearby tracks. Under the direction of Samuel Gumpertz, former manager of the park's "Midget City," all of Dreamland would be refurbished. On May 26, finishing touches were being completed on "Hellgate," a watery boat ride through dusky interior caverns. Hot tar was being used to repair leaks in the facility, and heat from the tar caused overhead bulbs to explode. Within moments, Hellgate was in darkness, the tub of hot tar was knocked over, and Hellgate was aflame. Soon, the wooden and papier-mache buildings that made up the rest of Dreamland would become part of the conflagration. Local firefighters put up their best efforts. Joining them were departments from stations throughout the city—and one fire department never before called on to fight an actual fire: the one staffed by the little people of Midget City. Their tiny steam engines sprang into action, hoping to divert the flames from their mini-Nuremburg, but the battle was a futile one. Like the rest of Dreamland, Midget City was a total loss.

Following Jean's death in 1944 at the age of 75, Inez continued to live in the tiny house, sometimes renting it out during her winter sojourns in Florida. In 1950, one renter learned that living in a tiny house can have unexpected consequences: soaking in the 36" x 19" x 19" Bregant-sized tub, she got stuck and wasn't rescued until 60 hours later. "She had plenty to drink," noted one wag, "just nothing to eat."

Inez Bregant died in 1969 at the age of 81. In her will she left \$42,000 to the City of Council Bluffs, which was used to purchase a 183-bell carillon. The carillon was placed at the Bregants' favorite destination: Lookout Point. ("Actually," noted a friend, "I think Inez would have preferred it if they'd installed some chairs. She said there was never any place to sit up there.")

The Bregant home is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is also designated as a Council Bluffs Local Landmark. Oversight of the house eventually passed to Preserve Council Bluffs, which continues work on the building's restoration.

In their heyday, the Bregants were described as "cheerful and full of life." Jean Bregant agreed: "it's to your advantage to be friendly and wear a smile. A person can find a happier road if he's willing to adapt." And the Bregants adapted very well.

### Donald-Brian Johnson's

monthly column, "Smack Dab in the Middle: Design Trends of the Mid-20th Century," is nationally syndicated. Earlier columns were collected in his 2011 book, *Postwar Pop: Memorabilia of the Mid-20th Century*. Mr. Johnson received his undergraduate and graduate degrees in English and Speech from Northwestern University. He has worked in the Midwest as an award-winning theatre director, television/radio reporter, and advertising writer, and has written a dozen collector guides for Schiffer Books.



# From Hoarder to Historian: *Preserving NYC Queer History via Club Flyers*

DAVID KENNERLEY

When I moved to New York City from rural Pennsylvania in the late 1980s, I had no solid plan. Nearly 30, I had few friends and was struggling with my career, identity, and sexuality. One night my roommate dragged me to a dance club called Roxy on the western edge of our Chelsea neighborhood.

When we walked into the cavernous space packed with hundreds of clubgoers, I was gob-smacked. It was a heady mix of gay muscle boys, lesbians, drag queens, trans folks, straights, and skinny bi-curious geeks like me, dancing to the pulsating house music. I realized I had found my tribe - a glorious, throbbing confederacy of misfits.

Back then, when you would exit a club, promoters handed out flyers for other parties. This was before the internet. Everyone would throw these printed invites on the sidewalk, but I hung onto mine. I loved the dazzling images of drag queens, celebrities, and shirtless hunks — they were mini works of art.

These flyers were not only a souvenir of a night well-lived, but the beginnings of an ephemera collection that documents an aspect of New York City's queer social history toward the end of the twentieth century.

Before long, I was on mailing lists from party promoters like John Blair (Roxy, Twilo, Limelight), Marc Berkley (Lick It! at Limelight, Bump!, Club USA), and The Saint At Large (The Black Party, The White Party). I also sought

out gay-centric shops like A Different Light bookstore, The Starting Line clothing store, and Rainbows & Triangles gift store (all long gone), grabbing any invites that caught my eye. Was I simply a hoarder or uncannily prescient? Perhaps a bit of both.

My clubbing heyday was the '90s. By the end of the decade, I had managed to collect over 1,200 club flyers. Three decades later, I decided to share my favorite examples in the form of a coffee-table style book, titled *GETTING IN: NYC Club Flyers from the Gay 1990s*.

## An explosion of queer nightlife options

Three factors made the 1990s a perfect time for the proliferation of queer venues. The first was real estate. New York City was still reeling from the 1987 financial market meltdown, and there were neighborhoods where real estate was cheap. Today's tourist-clogged High Line was an elevated railroad track to nowhere, hulking and abandoned. Instead of the manicured Hudson River Park greenway, the waterfront was lined with dilapidated wooden buildings and concrete piers where gay men gathered for furtive sex. The now-trendy Meatpacking District was home to actual meat-packing plants. The bustling art gallery district was only just beginning to migrate from SoHo to the no-man's land of West Chelsea. And Times Square was still a haven for peep shows and

crumbling XXX movie houses. Slashed municipal budgets kept these low-rent districts intact to house nightclubs and similar venues.

The second factor was the emergence of free gay entertainment guides like *HX* and *NEXT* magazines, which encouraged folks to go out. They were carefully researched and, for the first time, provided reliable information like which DJ was spinning on a given night, or which drag queen was hosting a certain party.

The third was the AIDS crisis. This threat motivated many LGBTQ folks to come out of the closet, maximize their visibility, and find strength in numbers while fighting for a solution.



18 *Figure 1. Disco Inferno at Roxy (1991); 4"x 6." Design: Gregory Homs. All illustrations from the author's collection.*



**JOHN BLAIR**  
PRESENTS

**MUSCLE ON WHEELS**  
Mens Rollerskating  
*EVERY TUESDAY NITE*

At The  
**ROXY**

515 W 18TH STREET (Between 10th & 11th)  
(212) 645-5156

DJ's :  
**ANDREW PASQUANTONIO &  
JOHNNY VICIOUS**

<p><b>BEGINNING &amp; INTERMEDIATE ROLLERSKATING LESSONS AT 6:30PM</b></p>	<p><b>8PM - 9PM.....\$ 6 9PM - 10PM.....\$ 8 10PM.....\$10 ANY GYM ID.....\$ 8 SKATE RENTAL.....\$ 3</b></p>
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Figure 2. *Muscle on Wheels at Roxy* (1991); 5" x 7." Photo: Sean Kahlil.

*GETTING IN* chronicles nearly 100 venues popular in the 1990s, though I am certain there were many more.

### The multi-level, gay-centric mega-clubs

In the '90s, my go-to venue was Roxy, a mega-club on far West 18<sup>th</sup> Street. It opened as a roller rink in 1978 at the peak of disco-mania and became a queer-centric dance club around 1990. The massive 6,000-square-foot dance floor had oval bars at either end, each surmounted by a phalanx of gyrating, skimpily clad go-go gods. The atmosphere was celebratory—often the entire space was festooned with mylar streamers. You'd come home with glitter in your underwear.

At the dawn of the decade, many flyers employed the retro psychedelic style of the '60s and '70s. One example from Roxy (1991) promotes a "Disco Inferno" party, referencing the 1977 hit movie "Saturday Night Fever" (Figure 1). This is one of many flyers from this era that had both playful and ironic vibes. Much of the appeal—including historic minutiae—is in

**LICKIT** AT LIMELIGHT  
PRESENTS THE  
**HOT! SLEAZY!**  
UNDERWEAR PARTY  
FIND ROMANCE IN THE DARK...

**WED. JUNE 12. 10PM**  
**47. W. 20 ST.**  
**212/807.0702**

**\$5 w/ \$10 w/o**

**50% OF DOOR WILL BENEFIT!**  
**QUEERNATION!**

MUSIC: ANDREW  
DOOR: PAUL MARTONE  
YOUR HOSTS  
MARC BERKLEY  
↓  
JUAN DAVILA

Figure 3. *Lick It! at Limelight* (1991); 4" x 6." Illustration: Broadway. [Author's collection]

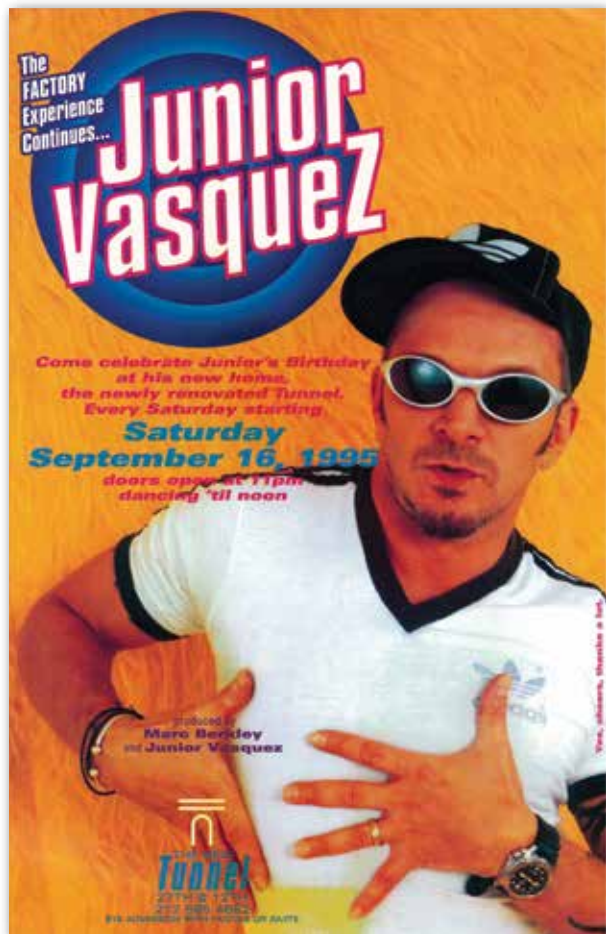


Figure 4. Junior Vasquez at Tunnel (1995); 11" x 17." Photo: Michael Lavine. Design: Claudio Braz.

the fine print on the reverse. At the Disco Inferno event, cocktails were only \$2.75. The invite also served as a ticket, offering free admission for two people. And the phone number does not include an area code, since all of Manhattan had the same area code before 1999. For *GETTING IN*, we made sure both sides of the flyers were illustrated.

It wasn't long before promoter John Blair was brought in to attract the muscular, shirtless gay crowd. His flyers featured gorgeous black-and-white photos by Sean Kahlil, whom I interviewed for the book. This was the birth of the storied "Chelsea Boy," who was clean cut, muscular, and had no body hair. Kahlil said the images were meant to exude health and fitness, a contrast to the wasted bodies of those suffering from HIV/AIDS. Many of these flyers were designed by artists. Professional photographers were hired to shoot the models in studio settings, and the models were paid for their work.

One 1991 flyer promotes Muscle on Wheels on Tuesday nights, a nod to Roxy's roller-rink past (Figure 2). They offered a \$2 discount if you showed your gym ID. At that time there was a degree of body fascism, an attitude

that would be less acceptable today. The Roxy danced its last dance in 2007 and a few years later the building was demolished. Now there is a luxury condo on the site.

Another legendary mega-club was Limelight, located on Sixth Avenue and West 20th Street. Originally a Gothic-style church built in the 1840s, it became a nightclub in 1983 under club king Peter Gaten, who also owned the Palladium, Tunnel, and Club USA in the '90s. The space was enormous, encompassing over 12,000 square feet preserving the arched wooden beams, stained glass, and wainscoting of the original structure.

Limelight held outrageous parties like Disco 2000, Shampoo!, and Mea Culpa. To attract a midweek crowd, they threw parties like Lick-it! and Res-Erection that featured a back room for sexual shenanigans. These areas were sometimes patrolled by safety monitors to make sure things did not get too wild.

One flyer, featuring an alluring illustration by an artist named Broadway, promotes a "Hot! Sleazy!" underwear party where patrons can "find romance in the dark" (Figure 3). Limelight, after being briefly rebranded as Estate and then, Avalon, closed for good in 2003. The building currently houses three restaurants.

Arguably the most famous DJ of the decade was Junior Vasquez, who had residencies at Tunnel, Sound Factory, and Palladium. This was a time when DJs were becoming celebrities in their own right. Vasquez was one of the first openly gay, globally known DJs and producers, and had an immense following, a mixed crowd, including people of color, both gay and straight. One brightly-colored flyer for a weekly Saturday party at the Tunnel features a dynamic photo of the superstar and includes his name in bold graphics (Figure 4).

### Mid-sized and smaller clubs and bars

Mid-sized and smaller queer clubs and bars multiplied and thrived in 1990s New York City. Most were located in Manhattan, centered around the East Village, Meatpacking



Figure 5. Happy Hour at Splash Bar (1992); 8.5" x 5.5." Artist unknown.



Figure 6. Channel 69 at Pyramid Club (1991); 4.25" x 5.5." Artist unknown.

District, and the emerging gayborhood of Chelsea, which had supplanted the West Village as the queer epicenter of the city. Because these venues largely catered to locals and were open seven days a week, not all bothered to invest in promotional flyers.

Perhaps the most culturally significant was Splash Bar, on West 17<sup>th</sup> Street. Opened in 1991, it ushered in a new era of gay bar design, with high ceilings and a bank of large windows. Pedestrians could stroll by and see patrons inside, a contrast to the traditional dark, cave-like bars with windows painted black.

The brainchild of business partners and boyfriends Brian Landeche and Harry Bartel, the space was polished, sleek, and modern, with video screens throughout, even above each urinal. Popular parties held at Splash were Musical Mondays, Campus Thursdays, Full Frontal Fridays, and Sunday Tea.

Splash was distinguished by its open showers behind the bar, where nearly nude go-go boys would shimmy, shake and soap up. One early flyer is "splashed" with water droplets while a stylized muscular figure pours water from a vessel (Figure 5). Over the years, Splash expanded into a

multilevel dance club and lasted until 2013, when the gayborhood had migrated north to Hell's Kitchen. Ironically, the space now houses a retail store that sells scuba equipment.

One of the longest-running venues was Pyramid Club, a gritty music and drag-centric performance space on Avenue A near East 6<sup>th</sup> Street in the East Village. Opened in 1979, it was long considered a vanguard of counter-culture, where pioneering drag artists such as Lypsinka, Lady Bunny, Sister Dimension, and RuPaul got their starts. On other nights, punk rockers and hip-hopsters could be found.

A flyer from 1991 publicizes one of their most successful '90s-era parties: Channel 69. It was hosted by drag queen Linda Simpson, still a beloved fixture in the New York nightlife scene (Figure 6). The invite, with retro '50s graphics, promotes "Gay Jeopardy!" with witty categories like "Fag Fashions" and "Lesbian Lingo." The musical guest star was the drag performer Afrodite.

Pyramid shuttered in 2021, a casualty of the Covid pandemic. In its place is Baker Falls, a bar/coffee shop and outpost of The Knitting Factory.

### Safe havens for a battered LGBTQ community

The AIDS crisis was raging at the start of the decade, having claimed the lives of 90,000 people in the U.S. alone. Tragically, being diagnosed HIV-positive was tantamount to a death sentence. The drugs at the time were woefully inadequate and came with debilitating side-effects (the lifesaving, protease-inhibitor "drug cocktails" would not become available until later in the decade.)

When the crisis emerged in the 1980s, the U.S. government was in deep denial about the epidemic, so grassroots groups like ACT UP were formed to demand



Figure 7. Divas Fight AIDS at Palladium (1992); 4" x 6." Artist unknown.

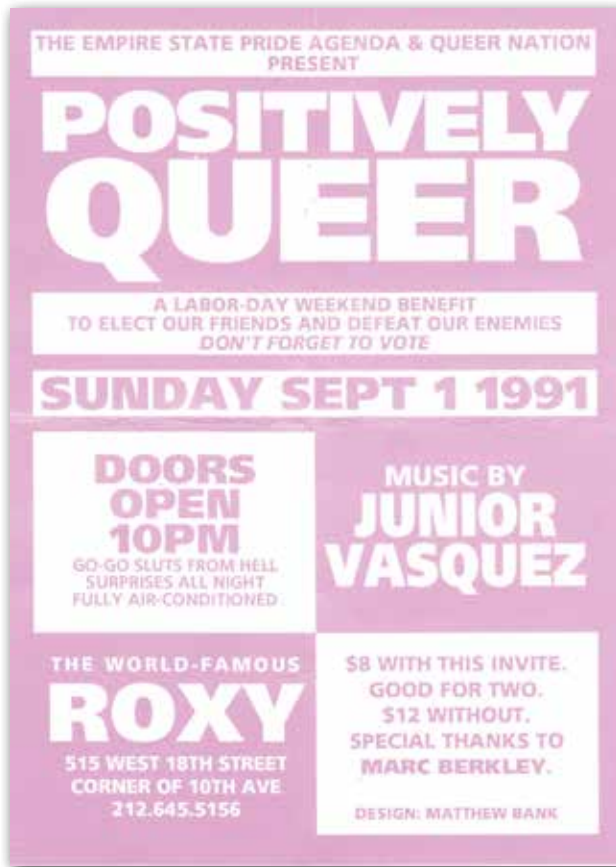


Figure 8. *Positively Queer at Roxy (1991); 5" x 7."* Design: Matthew Bank.

funding for treatment research. Activists were literally fighting for their lives, and their actions continued throughout the '90s. The LGBTQ community needed to come together. Gay men and women came out of the closet and flocked to the clubs to celebrate their sexuality and cultivate a supportive community. More than one-third of the club flyers in my collection mention benefits to support AIDS causes.

One of my favorite invites promotes a 1992 party at the Palladium called Divas Fight AIDS (Figure 7). It is a prime example of a club promoting the cause, in this case a benefit for LifeBeat, the music industry group to fight AIDS. The flyer, with its comic-book heroine literally battling the scourge, boasts a list of popular female performers like Loleatta Holloway, The Cover Girls, and Georga Jones.

As the fight against AIDS became increasingly organized, flyers began to take on a political tone. One example is for the 1991 Positively Queer party co-hosted by the Empire State Pride Agenda, a political action group, and Queer Nation, a spinoff of ACT UP (Figure 8). Queer Nation is considered the first major organization to co-opt the word "queer," reclaiming a historically pejorative term. The party was billed as "A benefit to elect our friends and defeat our enemies." It also promised "Go-go sluts from hell."

Another example, the Vote & Dance party (Figure 9) urged people to watch the election night returns on video screens and "Celebrate (or commiserate) the 1992 election." I attended this party and recall the elation when Democratic

candidate Bill Clinton beat incumbent George H. W. Bush. It was exhilarating to share this experience with hundreds of like-minded peers.

Perhaps the most memorable flyer in my collection is for a pre-election event supporting Bill Clinton in his 1992 presidential bid (Figure 10). The flyer, created by Jon McEwan and Jason McCarthy, promoted a party called Purgatory at Sound Factory Bar. The digitally-manipulated photo-collage of Clinton and Al Gore as shirtless, muscled party boys in short shorts with their arms draped around each other, was likely a great inducement to get out the vote. One of the DJs was Susan Morabito, who can still be found spinning at gay events across the U.S.

### The decline of gay clubs in Manhattan

While many of the buildings survive, most of the nightspots in Manhattan have closed. All of the storied mega-clubs have vanished, and in recent years, new queer dance parties have popped up in warehouse spaces in Brooklyn and Queens. Only a handful of the smaller venues — such as Barracuda lounge in Chelsea, The Monster in Greenwich Village, and The Cock in the East Village — have hung on.

The reason is simple: economics. The formerly derelict areas became gentrified, with rents increasing by a factor of four and above. As more affluent tenants moved into these neighborhoods, community boards became stronger and fought against the nightspots. At the same time, zoning



Figure 9. *Vote & Dance at Roxy (1992); 4.25" x 6."* Artist unknown.

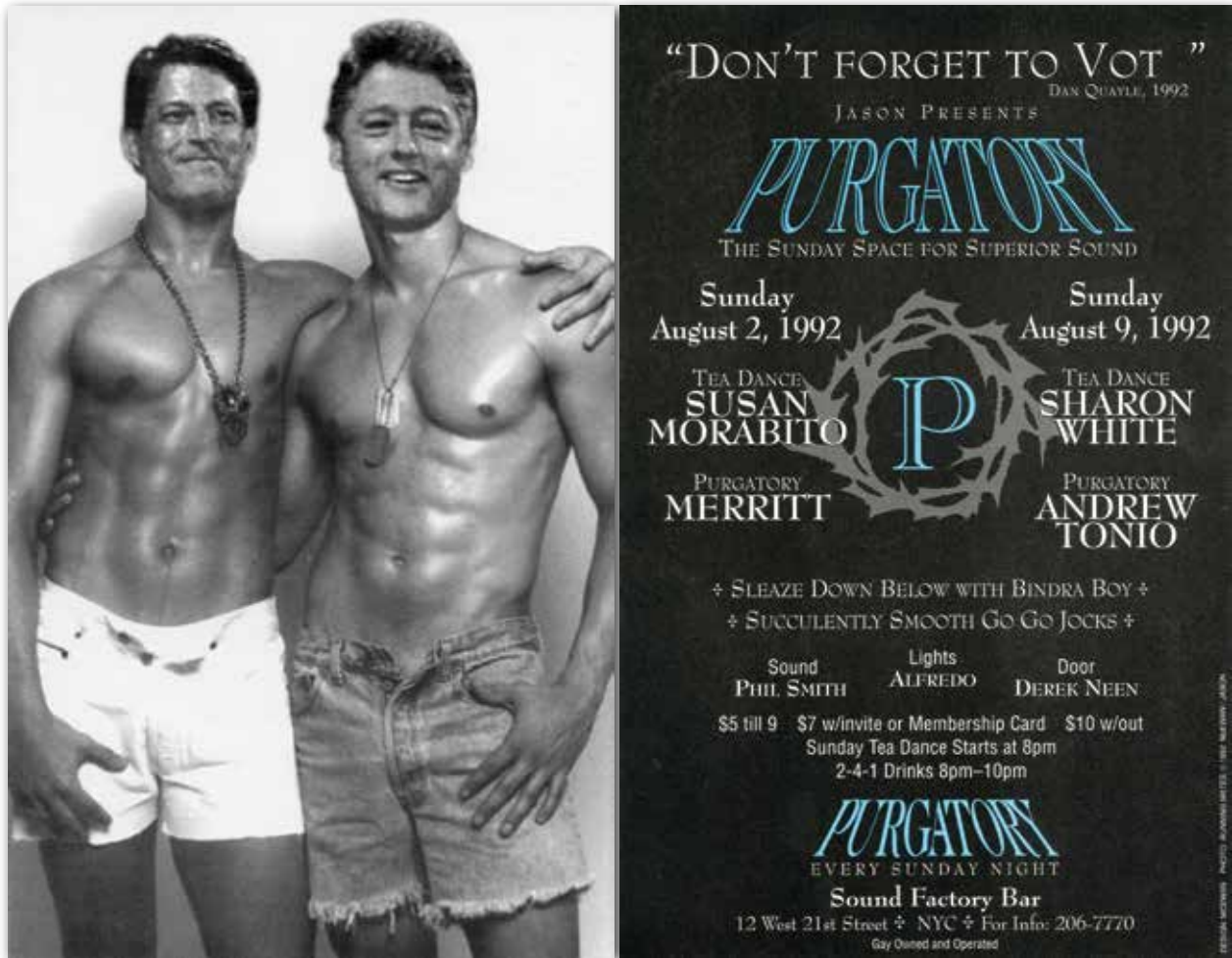


Figure 10. Al Gore/Bill Clinton, Purgatory at Sound Factory Bar (1992); 5.5" x 8.5." Design/photo: Jon McEwan, Jason McCarthy.

laws were changing to allow more residential development, causing rents to skyrocket and driving many people out of Manhattan in search of cheaper apartments. Not only did the nightspots retreat to the outer boroughs, but the club staff, artists, and clubgoers fled as well.

The economic shift was accompanied by other new policies. In 1994, recently elected Mayor Rudy Giuliani instigated a war against nightlife with his massive "civic cleanup," forcing many venues to close.



Map of clubs downtown and midtown Manhattan.



continued on page 24

Some experts have argued that the rise of geolocation-based hookup apps meant that fewer gay men bothered to frequent clubs and bars, contributing to the demise of the clubs. But cultural mores were beginning to shift. By the dawn of the twenty-first century, many gay men no longer felt the need to live in gay enclaves or congregate solely in gay bars, opting instead to mingle with the mainstream.

### Preserving a lost chapter in gay history for future historians

What were meant to be disposable ads are now compelling pieces of ephemera that you can't find in guidebooks or oral histories. Nightspots today rarely issue printed flyers; events everywhere are typically promoted on line. I didn't realize it at the time, but flyers are records of historical moments. They hold information such as club name, address, hosts, dates and other details. Their visual style and tone have just as much to say about the tenor of the time. Looking at the collection now, I see how these flyers can be used by historians to understand an era that has passed.

In *GETTING IN*, we have used data from the flyers to map the club locations, creating a geographic landscape of queer nightlife in the '90s. For me, as a Manhattan resident,

it has been fascinating to revisit these spots to see their current incarnations. Some buildings survive, rekindling my emotional connection to those places. That speaks both to the power of place and to the value of preserving the ephemera of LGBTQ history.

### David Kennerley

is a journalist and historian specializing in LGBTQ culture. For nearly two decades, he has been an Arts & Entertainment reporter for *Gay City News*, the NYC-based LGBTQ newspaper and website. Several examples from his ephemera collection were shown in the "Letting Loose and Fighting Back" exhibition at the New-York Historical Society honoring the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall uprising. He is a graduate of Vassar College, where he studied Art History. His fully illustrated book, *GETTING IN: NYC Club Flyers From the Gay 1990s*, was published by Daken Press in January 2024 (2nd Ed.).



## HISTORY OF THE EPHEMERA SOCIETY OF AMERICA

The Ephemera Society of America was born with *Ephemera USA 1*, at the Harrison Inn, Southbury CT, in May 1980, the first event in *World Ephemera Year*, a concept created by The Ephemera Society in England founded by Maurice Rickards in 1975. The Society's first North American initiative in 1977 had been called *This Is Ephemera*, which provided the title for an exhibition at the Bennington Museum VT and a book written by Rickards. Rickards's Vermont connection was Calvin P. Otto, nominally in charge of *World Ephemera Year* events in North America (a World Ephemera Congress *Ephemera 80* sponsored by Sotheby Parke Bernet & Co. was planned for September in London). William Frost and Emily Davis Mobley and Bill's employer, the antiquarian bookman Sam Murray, contacted Otto in the spring of 1979 with the idea of holding a paper fair and conference to complement the London event. After discussing logistics with the show promoters of the Westchester Book & Paper Show at Iona College (who recommended the Harrison Inn and agreed to promote the event) the Mobleys drafted a formal proposal to the British society — which was accepted. The first planning meeting was held at a Sotheby's on-site auction in New Hampshire in 1979, with Sally De Beaumont from The Ephemera Society, Otto, and the Mobleys. By Labor Day, the dates in May 1980 were set and the seeds of the American society sown. The first contact for participants was made at a conference of the American Historical Print Collectors Society. Elizabeth Baird introduced graphic designer Jack Golden to the Mobleys and he offered to design a poster for the ephemera event, which Otto agreed to have printed. At the Cambridge Antiquarian Book Fair in the Fall of 1979, Golden, Otto, and the Mobleys drafted proposals to launch the event as the first for an American branch of The Ephemera Society, not solely part of *World Ephemera Year*. The program for *Ephemera USA 1* shows how ambitious were the hopes of this small group for the future of the American offshoot of The Ephemera Society. Among the conference speakers, private collectors were represented by Golden and Rickards; institutional collectors by Wendy Shadwell of the New-York Historical Society; and auction houses by David Margolis of Swann Galleries and two representatives of Sotheby Parke Bernet of London. The list of booth-holders at the 1980 Fair shows how widely the Mobleys recruited the best among antiquarian book, autograph, and antique dealers who were known to have already specialized in what used to be called Paper Americana. Most continued to be loyal supporters. Beth Baird, Kit Barry, Lynnette Bohling, Diane DeBlois & Robert Dalton Harris, Valerie Jackson-Harris, Al Malpa, David Margolis & Jean Moss, Willis Monie, Steve & Carol Resnick, Leonard & Jackie Balish, Jean Berg, Rocky & Avis Gardiner, Bob Lucas, Jan & Larry Malis, Barbara Meredith, Sam Murray, Stephen Paine, and John Simon.

In 1984, Dick Friz, editor of the *Ephemera News* opened a profile of Bill with: "Every field of collecting has need for a visionary, a spokesman, cheerleader, an impresario all in one - who is capable of rallying a group of individuals to action. No matter that they sometimes appear to be at odds with one another, lacking contact with any world but their own."

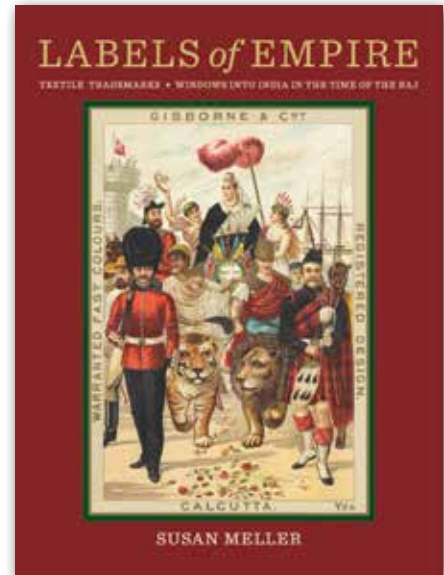
# Book REVIEW

**Labels of Empire, Textile Trademarks: Windows into India in the Time of the Raj** by Susan Meller  
544 pages, 1285 color images, \$100. Goff Books, \$100.00 31 Commercial Blvd., Suite F, Novato, CA 94949

My first impression of the enormous and very heavy volume was that this collected wealth of images might have been better served by an electronic catalog. But this is not a 'coffee-table' book of 'eye-candy' images. The over 1200 labels, beautifully reproduced in their dazzling magnificence, are here intelligently analyzed, deeply researched, and placed in historic and cultural context.

Here's just a teaser: under the chapter Flora and Fauna are six pages on cows and how their status in India is reflected in label designs and other ephemera such as bazaar prints and advertisements. Four of the illustrations on the Cow With Deities pages "...depict the cow as a cosmic figure, her body containing not only Hindu

gods, but also mountains, lakes, trees, the sun, and the moon. In figs. 3 and 4, the top line reads in Hindi, 'Hey, descendants of Aryans! Save the cow.' The six men seated underneath the cow in fig. 4 represent a Parsee, an Englishman, a Muslim, and three Hindus.



As one of the Hindu men serves milk, he states, 'Drink milk and protect the cow.' The man standing on the right, identified as 'Dharmaraj' (Righteous Ruler), pleads with the sword-wielding demon (labeled 'Kali Yuga'), 'Do not kill the cow, everyone depends on it.' The Hindu sadhu in the top left recites the Sanskrit slokas. Some have viewed this image as a call for unity, for everyone to share in the gift of the cow as mother/goddess. Others have seen it as provocative propaganda. The debate continues."

The printer Fritz Schleicher, since 1903 owner of the Ravi Varma Press, published a bazaar print of the described image but was ordered by the Bombay



government to remove the demon figure and publish a censored version.

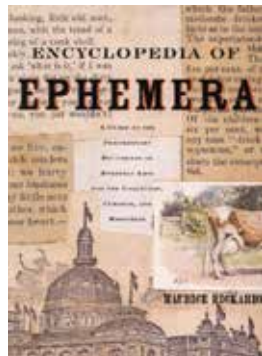
The heart of the book is dedicated to such fine-grained answers to “what is going on” in each image and offers an extraordinary primer into Hindu deities and their narratives, as well as a window into everyday life in early twentieth century India and how the British (particularly the Royals) were viewed. The Introduction helps put the labels in context by covering Turkey red and other dyes, export cloth to India from Manchester and its rival Japan, items made in India from British cloth and repurposed labels (clothing, wall hangings, book covers, etc.), trade catalogs, trade cards and other promotions. The last chapters cover fabric mills in India (which also made use of labels as trademarks), and Mahatma Gandhi’s Swaraj and Swadeshi movements boycotting British made goods which culminated in Indian independence from Britain. (Mother India, Bharat Mata, became an icon of the independence movement — see at right on a label from the 1920s-30s her flowing hair and sari conform to the cartographic shape of India.)

The book won the 2024 Next Generation Indie Award for Education/Academic non-fiction. And, truly, fabric historian Susan Meller (founder of the Design Library, now in Wappingers Falls, NY) deserves many more accolades for this acme of ephemera studies.

—Diane DeBlois



Before you’re “buried in woollen,” you owe yourself a copy of the *Encyclopedia of Ephemera*.



From ABC primer to Zoëtropé strip the 402-page *Encyclopedia of Ephemera* gathers everything you’d ever want to know about more than 400 categories of ephemera. For beginners or experts it’s the one illustrated reference work to have.

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When your copy arrives, turn to page 65 to learn about “buried in woollen affidavits” — before it’s too late.

For your copy, please send a check for \$95 (Free shipping to U.S. address) to Ephemera Society Book Offer, PO Box 95, Cazenovia, NY 13035. Non-Members \$105.

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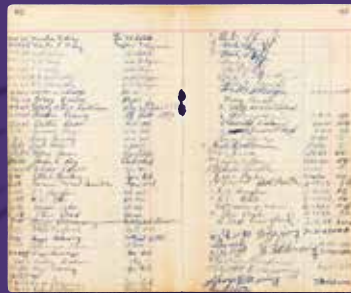
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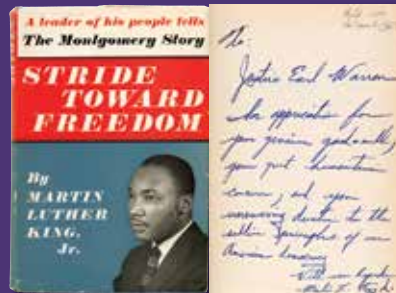
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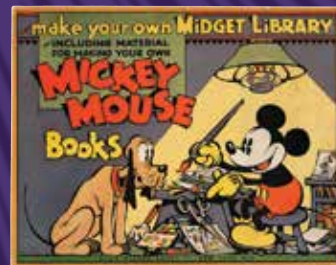
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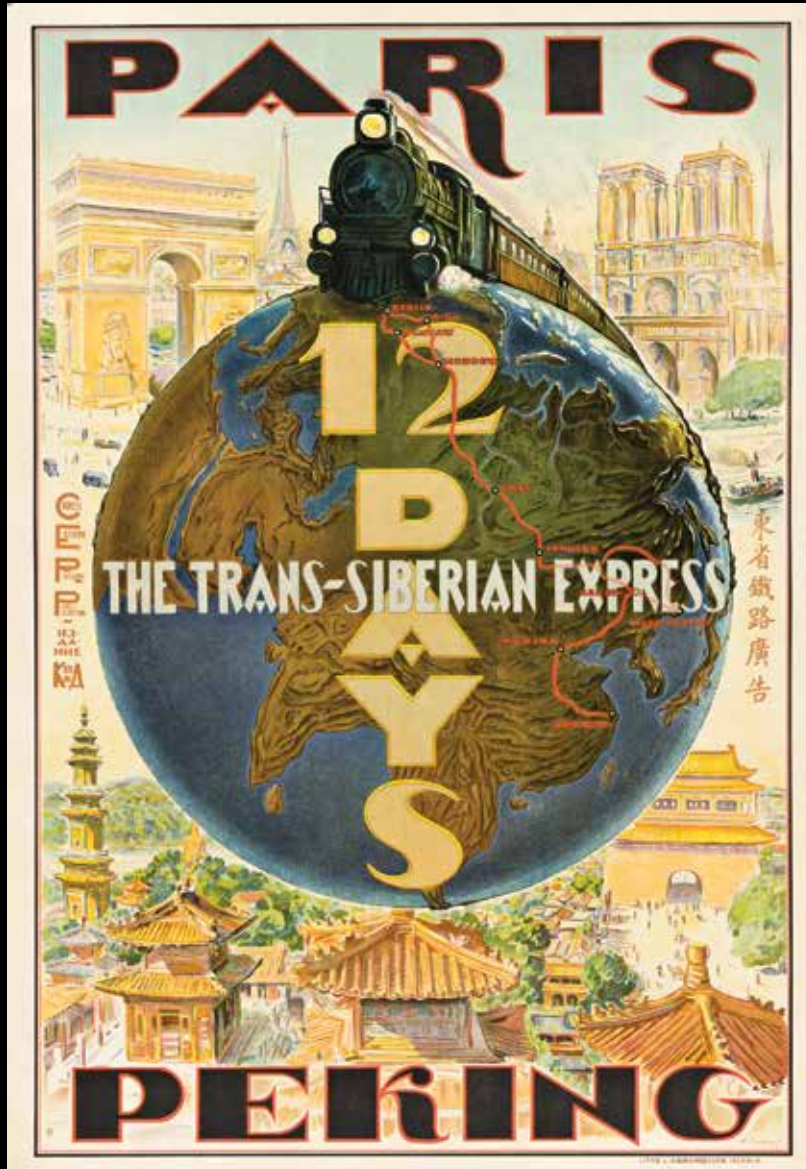
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A. Stepanoff, *The Trans-Siberian Express / 12 Days Paris-Peking*, circa 1900.  
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