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A Commonplace of Excellence: *Ephemera from Minnesota's Flour Mills, 1880-1930*

BY MOIRA F. HARRIS



An 1880s tradecard printed by George Dunston of Buffalo for the George Tileston Milling Company of St. Cloud shows steam-driven mechanical harvesting of wheat, along with their different brands of flour packed in sacks or barrels.

Minnesota, the Land of Sky Blue Waters, is defined by its rivers and was made famous by two waterfalls in Minneapolis, its largest city. Minnehaha Falls and the Falls of St. Anthony both supplied power to flour mills - celebrated in ephemera of many kinds.

Water from Lake Minnetonka goes through Minneapolis to cascade down Minnehaha Falls into the Mississippi River. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem, "The Song of Hiawatha," placed the Falls in literary history. But, as far as powering grist and flour mills, these were the smaller Falls.

The Falls of St. Anthony stretch across the Mississippi, forming an early barrier to navigation and travel,¹ but pioneer entrepreneurs realized their potential as a power source for both saw mills and flour mills built along its banks. They founded the towns of St. Anthony and Minneapolis, building mills of wood and limestone. Lithographed letterheads show mills, the river, the bridges, barrels, and the number of barrels of flour milled daily. Postcards, from the real photo era to linens and later color photo cards, show the Minneapolis mill district.²

Flour milling began in Minnesota in 1823 with a first mill built at Fort Snelling, located at the juncture of the Mississippi and Minnesota rivers. By 1849 sawmills were operating on most Minnesota rivers. As the northern pine forests were logged, the lumber industry waned and its crews of Paul Bunyans

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The Ephemera Journal

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of America

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Dear Members and Friends:

After a relaxing summer, our new season begins with a burst of enthusiasm. I welcome you to another wonderful season, starting with this issue of the Ephemera Journal. We have expanded our other opportunities for your pleasure, as our Facebook page is active with frequent posts about exhibitions and events. Please feel free to share your own ephemera news!

Our website is your dynamic resource, where you will now find the essential calendar for everything pertaining to ephemera. I am sure you will appreciate this new feature. There is much more information about who we are, and what we do. Accessibility to articles, program registration, payments, a current event calendar, our blog, and contact with social media, makes this site now indispensable. And, of course, the amazing eNews, is delivered to your email box each month, with colorful images and stimulating news about ephemera, and your organization.

Our mid-year event will have taken place in Washington, D.C., by the time you read this letter, and details will be posted for the enjoyment of those who were unable to participate. Each autumn, we meet in a different area, with the goal of reaching local members.

Plans are underway for another wonderful conference and show next March. *Ephemera 35*, will provide a stellar program, featuring the exciting theme, *The Sporting Life*. Superb scholars and authors are already set for a fascinating program on sports and games. Formidable dealers, stocked with the finest material, make our Fair the country's showcase. There will be superb ephemera to meet the criteria of our eclectic audience, so, please mark your calendar for a special weekend, March 20-22, 2015, at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Old Greenwich, CT.

May, 2015 marks a very special event, and the "ephemera trip of a lifetime." The United Kingdom's Ephemera Society, our parent, is celebrating their 40th anniversary, while your ESA is celebrating their 35th. They have planned an exceptional *Anniversary Tour* for our pleasure, visiting famous and seldom-seen ephemera holdings in museums in London, Reading, and Oxford. Events are planned throughout the active Book Week, and include passes to the Olympia Book Fair, a very special Banquet in our honor, and a special reception with The Grolier Club. Both will take place at historic settings. Numerous Fairs and special events occur daily between May 18th and May 31st – described by ES Chairman Valerie Jackson-Harris, as "two weeks of madness." Participants must arrange their own travel and accommodations, and you may attend all, or part of the program; all the details will soon be available. Additionally, there are numerous other "happenings" before and after, and they will all be published for you shortly. We hope you will seriously consider a jaunt across the pond, with your passionate companions. The kettle is on, and our hosts couldn't be more excited to share their treasures and their friendship.

As always, we value your membership, and welcome your expertise, your suggestions, and your involvement; you are essential to our success.

Sincerely,



Nancy Rosin, President

ESA Members

Notify us if you are not receiving the monthly eNews:

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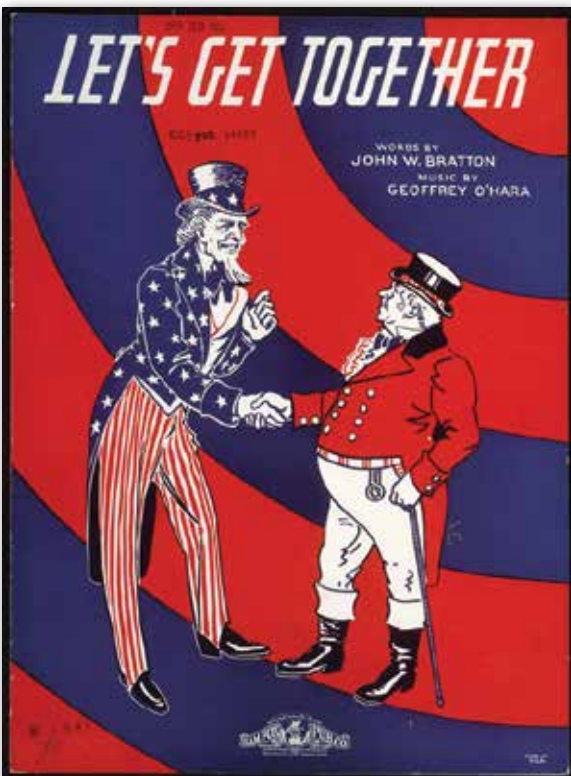
Ephemera Hands Across the Ocean



In 1978, members of the three-year-old Ephemera Society received information from the “North American Office” (alias Cal Otto), and a stateside Society was still in the planning stages.

In 2015, the British group will celebrate 40 years and we plan to join them in celebrating our 35. As our President notes on page 2, this promises to be a very special event. Here is a taste of the projected itinerary — based at the Royal National Hotel in Bloomsbury and beginning May 18: Tours of The Bodleian Library; The Victoria and Albert Museum; the Museum of London; Receptions at Armourer’s Hall and the College of Arms; Banquet at the National Liberal Club; one postal history fair; two ephemera fairs; two book fairs.

Watch for details in our eNews and to sign up on the web site of The Ephemera Society www.ephemera-society.org.uk/



In this Issue...

Molly Harris adds another dimension to our appreciation of “Food and Drink – Farm to Table” with research on the flour mills that established Minnesota as the grain capital of the country. Wheat, and flour, was first among staples to be considered as an American export (George Washington adopted a seven year crop rotation in 1786 with wheat as the principal cash crop, corn for domestic food needs, and legumes to rejuvenate the soil) and this article shows the industrial development that powered a grain revolution.

A student contribution on feed sacks, from Heather Buechler, focuses on just one aspect of flour advertising — the durable ephemera of the container. And a second student contribution, from Allyson Brantley, turns to beer — another element of the grain ‘business’ — offering a stimulating investigation of a very modern form of advertising ephemera and its political impact.

Labor Day may have just passed, but two of our contributions remind us that the parade of national holidays is on the horizon (Canadian Thanksgiving Day, American Thanksgiving Day, Christmas/Chanukah/ New Year’s). The greeting card business has largely dropped Thanksgiving, but Dan Gifford analyses some of the cultural feeling behind the early 20th century fad to exchange postcards honoring the holiday. And Julie Stires shares some of the artist-designed Christmas cards saved in scrapbooks by the artist whose home is now part of the Pasadena Museum of History.

As a nice coda to the reviewed book about photographs with playing cards, artist Paul Osman provides a short piece on cartomancy.

—Diane DeBlois, editor



A Sauk Centre flour mill put “power” in its title, and promised that they ground only the choicest hard wheat. The 1900 letterhead was printed by Harrison & Smith of Minneapolis.

moved west. Land in the forests they had denuded then became available to wheat farmers and thus another sort of mill was born.

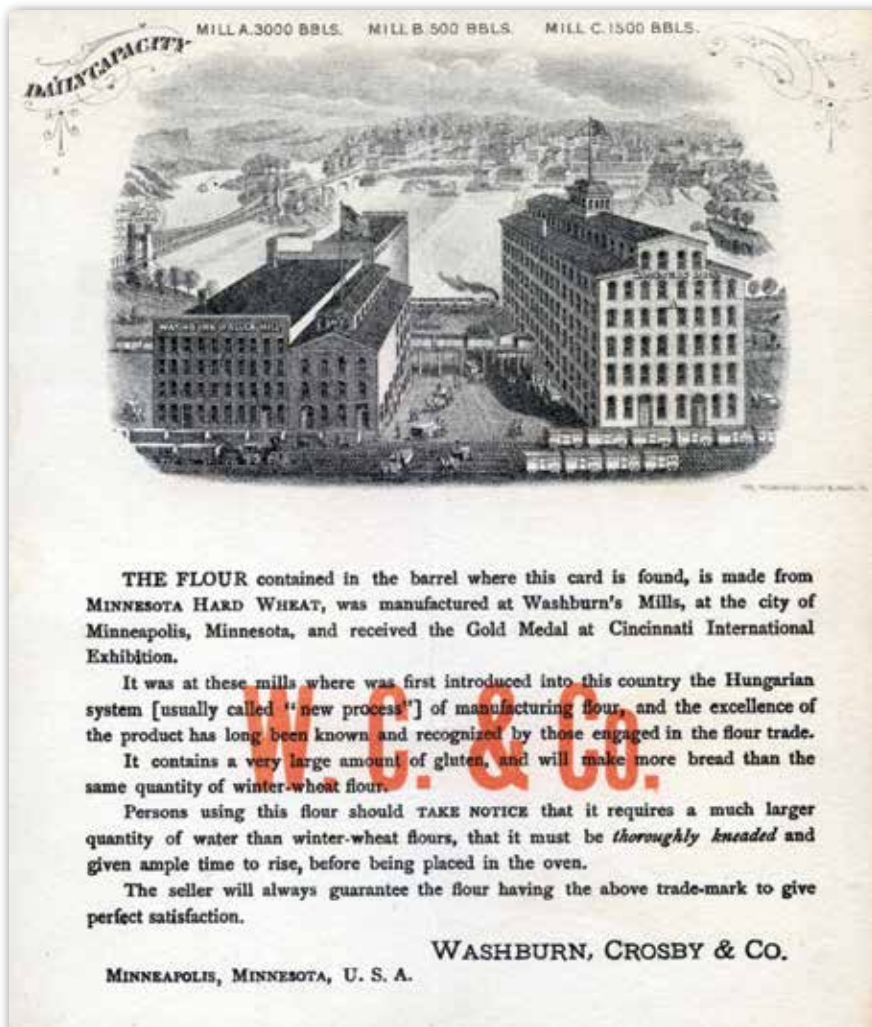
Minnesota’s wheat, suited to its climate, was planted in the spring. It had to be a tough plant to survive in the cold northern region and yielded an often brownish flour full of husks and kernels. New technologies, using rollers rather than millstones, and the middlings purifier that blew the flour through a series of sieves, were needed to produce the fine white flour that ensured success to commercial bakers, homemakers, and a burgeoning export market.

Washburn-Crosby, Pillsbury, and fifteen other firms built their mills along the east and west banks of the Mississippi. From 1880 until 1930 Minneapolis would be known as the Queen City of Flour,

until losing its title to Buffalo, New York. Most of the ephemera discussed in this article was created during that fifty year period.

Minneapolis and other Minnesota flour millers (totaling 307 by 1900)³ realized that their production far exceeded the needs of the local population. They had to

develop other markets so they could ship their excess barrels nationally and internationally. As these firms came of age in the second half of the nineteenth century, the millers took advantage of the many new forms of advertising. Trade cards, posters, broadsides, blotters, match books, calendars, paper dolls, letterhead stationery, barrelhead cards, postcards, coloring books, and fans were among the types of ephemera used in flour mill promotional campaigns. As newspapers and magazines devoted more space to



On an 1880s trade card printed by the Milwaukee Lithograph and Engraving Company, the three Washburn-Crosby mills are shown with rail connections in the foreground, beyond is the Mississippi River and, to the left, the first suspension bridge.

advertising, millers used these pages to introduce their products, often in full color.

Millers took part in parades, conventions, and sponsored booths at fairs. Minnesota's millers collaborated on a display in the Agriculture Hall at the World's Columbian Exhibition in Chicago in 1893. Silk flour sacks emblazoned with the logos of 150 flour mills were arranged in a pyramid, the only such statewide display. Duluth's Imperial mill and Pillsbury-Washburn had separate displays while Washburn-Crosby had a giant barrel filled with 10,000 small barrels to be given away.⁴

While a company could name its flour after the founder (i.e., Pillsbury's Best), other companies selected famous people from all periods as the names for their brands. Thus there were Minnesota flour brands named after Ben-Hur, Daniel Webster, Betsy Ross, Ethan Allen, Cinderella, King Midas, Mother Hubbard, Napoleon and his rival, the Iron Duke, Robin Hood, and Chief Sleepy Eye, in addition to those named more prosaically for the places where they were produced.

In 1880 the nation's millers entered their flour in a Cincinnati competition. Minneapolis's Washburn-Crosby

took gold, silver, and bronze medals and promptly named its premium flour, "Gold Medal," replacing "Superlative."⁵

Slogans were another part of the brand process. Washburn-Crosby used the phrase, "Eventually...why not now?" Cinderella brand flour was "Fit for a prince," "Ben-Hur flour has the Go to Make the dough," while Occident flour's advertisements argued "Costs a little more than others. Worth it!"

One mill invented a brand icon in 1891 in the guise of a small boy whose name combined the state's name with that of the goddess of agriculture. Trade cards, posters, postcards, a toy, and a coloring book of his adventures carried his image.⁶ A painting of Ceresota, that small boy, can still be seen high on the wall of the former Northwestern Consolidated Milling's Elevator A in downtown Minneapolis.⁷

The Royal Milling Company's Ben-Hur flour took advantage of the great interest in Lew Wallace's 1880 novel. Usually its advertisements showed the chariot race, but a smaller space meant that Ben-Hur had to stand with his horses. One Royal Milling Company advertisement offered a coupon for a children's coloring



An 1890s folding tradecard printed by the Milwaukee Lithograph and Engraving Company celebrates the Washburn-Crosby flour barrel that was so prominent at the World's Columbian Exhibition of 1893.

A Depression-era blotter offers aluminum cookware premiums with Cinderella brand flour (“Fit for a Prince”) made by a New Prague company.

book starring the Ben-Hur Doughboys as well as S & H trading stamps with the purchase of flour.⁸ Other firms soon produced Ben-Hur coffee, cigars, bicycles, shoe polish, and other goods that coincided with the release of both a play and movie retelling the story.⁹

The Chief Sleepy Eye brand of flour, named after a Sisseton Dakota leader, was produced from 1883-1921, in the town also named after the chief. Postcards, barrelheads, calendars, and fans bear his image. The Old Sleepy Eye Collectors Club keeps interest high in the many bits of ephemera and pottery collectibles that mill’s owners authorized.

Flour was first shipped in wooden barrels which necessitated the nearby establishment of barrel makers

or coopers to supply the mills.¹⁰ The name of the mill was stenciled or burned into the top of the barrel. A barrel, containing 196 pounds of flour, had its problems. Flour could leak. Barrels were usually recycled by bakers who used the staves to fire their ovens and perhaps saved the circular cards or barrelheads that identified the brands. When bakers turned to ovens fired by gas, the barrel was no longer as useful.

By 1888 bags of burlap, jute, or a rough cotton fabric called osnaburg were the first solution. These held the same amount of flour as the barrels and later came in half or quarter barrel sizes. They could be printed with a mill’s logo or with other patterns. Eventually mills ordered bags printed with patterns for cloth dolls

A 1931 centennial blotter for Eagle Roller Mill of New Ulm (producing Daniel Webster and Golden Coin flours) shows their old and new mill buildings – a common motif on letterheads and in city directories as well.

(such as the Ceresota boy) or with designs. Housewives learned to bleach and wash the sacks and remove the stitching so they could transform fabrics into clothing, sheets, towels, and quilts. One of the first companies to make sacks for flour, salt, sugar, or seeds was the Bemis Bro. Bag Company which moved part of its operations from St. Louis to Minneapolis in 1880 to be near the mills.

Paper sacks with lithographed designs became popular after World War II, but were available as early as the 1880s. The St. Paul Roller Mill participated in the 1888 St. Paul Winter Carnival's Industrial Parade with three sleighs. One held milling equipment, and the others were piled high with either cotton sacks holding Orange Blossom white flour or paper sacks holding the mill's graham flour.¹¹

the firms called on the printing industry. Minneapolis's first lithographer, Isador Monasch, came to the city from Germany in 1868. An advertisement placed in a publication issued for the Minneapolis Industrial Exposition Building (the city's first convention center) explains the work Monasch was able to produce: Office Stationery, Business Cards, Bill, Note and Letterheads, Colored Show Cards, Barrel Circulars, Large Colored Posters, Cuts of Machinery Finely Executed, and Orders for Photo Engraving Taken.¹³

While the millers could purchase many of their promotional materials directly from printers like Monasch or Harrison and Smith in Minneapolis (or from firms in Buffalo or Milwaukee), advertising in magazines and newspapers was usually handled by another type of firm: the advertising agency. By 1900



A postcard (lithographed by Isador Monasch) advising that the Ceresota Boy Dolls were out of stock at Northwestern Consolidated Milling Company was sent in 1910 to Master Roswell Peterson.

Other industries were attracted to the Falls by the success of the mills. Shipping could be done by river or rail as images of the Falls area indicate. A large lithograph (14 x 20 inches) produced for the C. A. Pillsbury firm shows the railroad tracks alongside the mill buildings and James J. Hill's Stone Arch railroad bridge (built in 1883) crossing the river on a diagonal past the Falls on its way to Union Depot. Carefully lettered on the engine are the words, "J. J. Hill," with the Pillsbury name appearing on horse drawn buggies.¹² The millers also formed their own railroad, the Soo Line, to carry flour to the port of Duluth for shipping on the Great Lakes.

For the many forms of ephemera used by the millers,

Minneapolis was said to have thirteen advertising agencies.¹⁴ Four years later it added another one: the Mac Martin Advertising Agency. This agency's clients included Washburn-Crosby, the Eagle Roller Mill of New Ulm (makers of Daniel Webster flour), Russell-Miller of Minneapolis (makers of Occident flour), and the Cream of Wheat Company.¹⁵

The Cream of Wheat Company began as the North Dakota Milling Company in Grand Forks, North Dakota. Tom Amidon, the chief miller, suggested that they make a cereal product. Its hot cereal was introduced at the Chicago World's Fair in 1893 to great acclaim, but the Panic of that year made funding the company's growth problematic. A shipment mainly of flour, but

continued from page 7

including a crate of cereal boxes, sent to New York was greeted with such praise for the cereal that the owners decided to move their company to Minneapolis in 1897 and rename it after its major product.

For the package design Emery Mapes, one of the founders and a former printer, used an old cut of a black baker, holding a knife in his right hand and a plate with a loaf of bread in his left. The baker became a chef in Mapes's adaptation, with the knife transformed into a ladle (or occasionally a spoon), and the plate supporting a bowl of steaming hot cereal. The baker's white toque grew larger and often he was given a bow tie to wear with his white suit now that he was a chef.¹⁶

Cream of Wheat advertisements were based on paintings done by many prominent illustrators, including N. C. Wyeth, Philip Goodwin, Haddon Sundblom (the creator of the Coca-Cola Santa Claus), and Edward Brewer. These men were usually credited as artists in the advertisements. By 1902 the company's first budget for advertising totaled \$10,000.¹⁷ Emery Mapes suggested that a local artist be hired and thus Brewer, a native of St. Paul, painted scenes of the Cream of White chef, known as Rastus, from 1911 until 1925.¹⁸

The Mac Martin agency placed Cream of White advertisements on the back covers of major circulation magazines like *Munsey's* or the *Ladies Home Journal* to interest homemakers and trade magazines such as *Bakers Weekly* or the *Northwestern Miller* to attract commercial bakers.¹⁹ In a contest the editors of *Everybody's* magazine invited readers to choose their favorite advertisement in the magazine's November 1907 issue. Over a dozen readers chose a Cream of

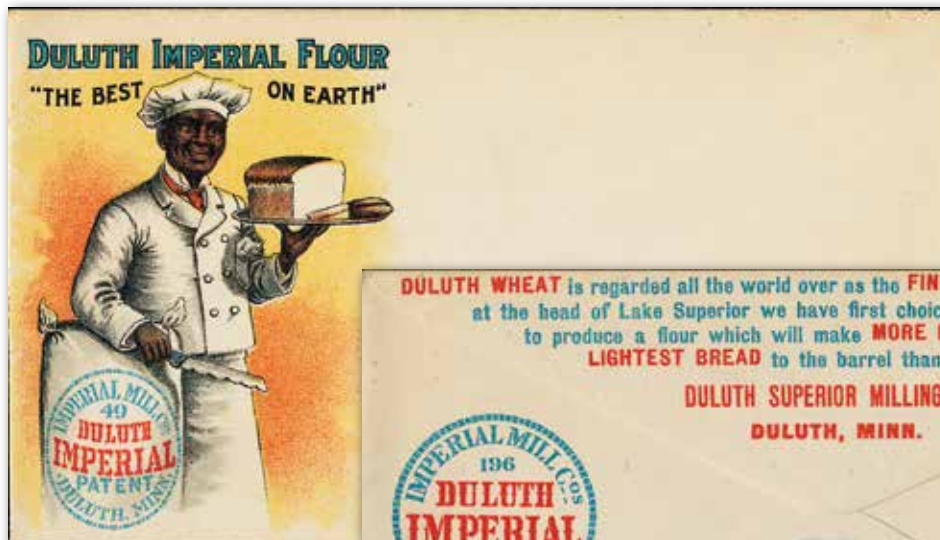
Wheat image of the chef holding a bowl of cereal as turkeys run past him. They cited the simple design of the ad, their familiarity with the figure of the chef, and the use of white space around the image rather than a page cluttered with copy.²⁰

That rather spare design became known as "Minnesota-Style Advertising," according to an advertising trade publication.²¹ Quoted in that issue was the statement by Emery Mapes that, while some Minnesota companies [like his] used illustrations and little text, perhaps a better descriptor of Minnesota advertising was "a commonplace of excellence," referring to advertisements by Washburn-Crosby, Log Cabin Syrup, and Munsingwear, as well. For Washburn-Crosby a series of full-page advertisements featured a chef, delivery boy, maid or baker, each dressed in white against a plain gray background. The only other elements in the image were a bag of Gold Medal flour with its logo in orange and the slogan, "Eventually... why not now?"

In many advertisements millers offered instructions for the best use of their products. These became small brochures, booklets, and full-fledged cook books filled with recipes, line drawings, and poetry. The homemaker only needed to send in the coupon and a few coins to cover postage to receive her booklet.

But the homemaker, it turned out, often wanted more information than what she found on these printed pages. This was brought home to Washburn-Crosby in 1921 when the firm launched a picture puzzle contest via a *Saturday Evening Post* advertisement. Those who solved the puzzle and sent in the coupon were to

receive a pin cushion in the shape of a flour sack. To the company's amazement 30,000 correct answers were received including a few letters from those who had questions to ask about baking



Front and back of an advertising envelope for Imperial Mill that, in 1889, had built in Duluth a mill as big or bigger than the Pillsbury "A" mill in Minneapolis. The black baker appeared in other advertisements for the mill that closed in 1905. [Courtesy Dick Sheaff]





A painting by Edward Brewer shows him creating a bust of Rastus the Cream of Wheat chef for a Saturday Evening Post issue in 1914.

or flour. Washburn-Crosby assigned employees to the task, creating a fictional cooking guru whom they named Betty Crocker.²²

As Betty Crocker, Marjorie Child Husted and her staff replied to queries by telephone, mail, radio, and later television. After the firm invested \$50,000 annually in a failing radio station, WLAG became WCCO for Washburn Crosby Company and would remain that even after the station was sold to CBS.²³

Washburn-Crosby consolidated operations of mills in Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, California, and Montana in 1928, renaming itself General Mills. Betty Crocker would appear on General Mills packaging, its cookbooks, and many other products, but she lacked an image until 1936. Her first portrait was by Neysa Moran McMein, an artist well known for her *McCall's* covers. She gave Betty a red jacket and a white blouse, a color scheme used whenever the concept was updated by other artists. Betty's last portrait, by John Stewart Ingle, was completed in 1996 when she turned seventy-five.²⁴ In 1954 a red spoon with her name on it took the place of her face and finally that was replaced on some products by a giant script "G."²⁵

In 2001 General Mills acquired its long time rival,

Pillsbury, thus uniting flour mills bearing the names of two brothers, Cadwallader and William Washburn. The food conglomerate united, as well, Betty Crocker, the Jolly Green Giant, and the Poppin' Fresh Doughboy from Minnesota's pantheon of brand icons.

Although flour milling is no longer done by the Falls of St. Anthony, the history of the industry is preserved there. On the foundations of the Washburn A Mill, the Minnesota Historical Society created the Mill City Museum in 2003. The museum displays milling machinery, history, and artifacts from the Richard Ferrell Milling History Collection, acquired by the Society in 2007. Ferrell was not only a collector, but had managed the Pillsbury "A" Mill. In 2013 General Mills announced that its Archives would move from company headquarters in Golden Valley to the former milling district. For those interested in the history of Minnesota flour mills a third important source can be found in the manuscripts and books in the library of the Minnesota Historical Society in St. Paul.



Flour mills expanded their lines to include products like breakfast cereals. Pillsbury's Vitos was launched in 1897.

Endnotes

- ¹ See Lucile M. Kane, *The Falls of St. Anthony. The Waterfall that Built Minneapolis*, St. Paul, Minnesota Historical Society (MHS) reprint 1987; Shannon M. Pennfeather, editor, *Mill City. A Visual History of the Minneapolis Mill District*, St. Paul, MHS 2003; James Gray, *Business without Boundary. The Story of General Mills*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota (U of M) 1954; John Storck and Walter Darwin Teague, *Flour for Man's Bread*, Minneapolis, U of M 1952; Vernard E. Lundin, *The Hubbard Milling Company 1878-1978: a past to remember a future to build*, Minneapolis, T.S. Denison 1978; William J. Powell, *Pillsbury's Best: a company history from 1869*, Minneapolis, The Pillsbury Company 1985.
- ² Bonnie Wilson, *Minnesota in the Mail*, St. Paul, MHS 2004, 72-5.
- ³ Robert M. Frame III, "Mills, Machines, and Milers," *Minnesota History* 46/47 (winter 1978), 157.
- ⁴ *St. Paul Globe*, October 13, 1893, 4.
- ⁵ Companies that entered their products in competitions sometimes used images of gold medals won in the design of their labels. Others, like Washburn-Crosby, renamed the product to indicate the honor as the Pabst Brewery would do after triumphing over Anheuser-Busch at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893, calling its beer "Pabst Blue Ribbon."
- ⁶ Marshall Whitlach and Alice Sargent Johnson, *The Adventures of Ceresota*, Minneapolis, Northwestern Consolidated Milling, 1912. The small booklet came with a set of Japanese watercolors and instructions on using them to paint the pages.
- ⁷ That elevator build in 1909 was the world's largest to be made of brick. It was rehabbed by Ellerbe Beckett in 1988 when the Ceresota boy was probably repainted. It is now an office building.
- ⁸ *St. Paul Globe*, January 18, 1903, 23.
- ⁹ See Jon Solomon, "Ben-Hur Ephemera: Chariot Races and American Consumerism," *Ephemera News*, 26:3 (Spring 2008), 12-22; and Roy Nuhn, "Ben-Hur, Inspirational Memorabilia," *Paper and Advertising Collector* 29/4 (April 2007), 10, 14.
- ¹⁰ Steve Leikin, "The Cooperative Coopers of Minneapolis," *Minnesota History* 57/8 (Winter 2001-02), 386-405.
- ¹¹ *St. Paul Globe*, February 2, 1888, 1.
- ¹² The lithograph was produced by the Milwaukee Lithograph and Engraving Company and appeared on the cover of "St. Anthony Falls - Making Minneapolis the Mill City," *Minnesota History* 58/5 and 6 (Spring/Summer 2003).
- ¹³ *Souvenir and Illustrated Handbook for Minneapolis Exposition*, 1886.
- ¹⁴ Sidney A. Sherman, "Advertising in the United States," *American Statistical Association* 7:52 (December 1900), 23.
- ¹⁵ Mac Martin Advertising Agency Papers, MHS.
- ¹⁶ In a 1893 letter sent to James J. Hill, the Barclay Manufacturing Company of Fergus Falls, Minnesota, used such an image of a baker in their letterhead. See James J. Hill Papers, item 6060, MHS. The Duluth Imperial Mill used a similar image of a black baker in its advertising as did Washburn-Crosby.
- ¹⁷ Dave Stivers, *The Nabisco Brands Collection of Cream of Wheat Advertising Art*, San Diego: Collectors' Showcase 1986, 13.
- ¹⁸ Patricia Condon Johnston, "Edward Brewer, Illustrator and Portrait Painter" *Minnesota History* (Spring 1980), 2-15. Two Cream of Wheat paintings by N.C. Wyeth and one by Philip R. Goodwin were given to the Minneapolis Institute of Arts by the Nabisco Company, then owners of Cream of Wheat, in 1970. None show Rastus the Cream of Wheat chef. Many other paintings for the cereal advertisements remain in the corporate archives in New Jersey. Cream of Wheat was acquired by the B & G Foods Inc. in 2007. For illustrations of many advertisements by other artists see the Dave Stivers book.
- ¹⁹ By the time Cream of Wheat began sponsoring radio programs featuring Rastus in the late 1920s its advertising was handled by J. Walter Thompson's Chicago office. See J.W. Thompson Archives, Duke University Libraries.
- ²⁰ Francis Bellamy, editor. *Effective Magazine Advertising. 508 Essays about 111 Advertisements*, New York, Mitchell Kennerley 1909, 64-72.
- ²¹ *Advertising and Selling*, March 15, 1919, 10.
- ²² See Laura Shapiro, "And here she is ... Betty Crocker!" *The American Scholar*, 73/2 (Spring 2004), 87-99, and Susan Marks, *Finding Betty Crocker, The Secret Life of America's First Lady of Food*, New York, Simon and Schuster 2005.
- ²³ George S. Hage, "Evolution and Revolution in the Media: Print and Broadcast," *Minnesota in a Century of Change*, ed. Clifford E. Clark, Jr., St. Paul MHS 1989, 302-3.
- ²⁴ Moira F. Harris, "H0-h0-h0! It Bears Repeating - Advertising Characters in the Land of Sky Blue Waters," *Minnesota History* 57/1 (Spring 2000), 29.
- ²⁵ When artist Claes Oldenburg was invited by the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis to create a work for their new Sculpture Garden he visited General Mills's headquarters and its art collection. Impressed by the red spoon as he had often sketched spoons, he and his wife Coosje van Bruggen designed a fountain in that shape which they named "Spoonbridge and Cherry (1985-1988)." This sculpture is often reproduced on postcards as a symbol of Minneapolis, the water of the fountain suggesting the lakes and Mississippi River. Information from didactic labels, "Claes Oldenburg: The Sixties," Walker Art Center, 2013.



Moira F. Harris is an art historian (Ph.D, University of Minnesota) and a former member of the ESA's board of directors. With her husband, Leo John, she wrote about their state's ephemera in *Minnesota on Paper. Collecting Our State's Printed History* (2006). Her current research interests include the dress of the Argentine gaucho and Minnesota fans.

Feed Sacks and Flour Sacks in the Midwest

BY HEATHER R. BUECHLER

A popular object among collectors of agricultural ephemera, the printed agricultural textile sack used for the distribution of grains, seeds, flours, and other milled goods has a rich history. A practical object that is also visually stunning, the grain sack's history offers insights into the history of print, graphic design, manufacturing, textile and paper industries. Sitting at the intersection of these industries, the sack is also part of the story of cities developing from a taming of the prairies through farming.

My initial interest in these objects came from a background as a letterpress printer as well as a rural Midwesterner. A fine artist first, my practice often examines the impact of early technological innovations on the shaping of the rural landscape. Since I was interested in the movement of people from the countryside to the city, I was drawn to all the sympathetic parts that fed this movement, including the sack which was tied to the early water-based transportation system moving people and product.¹

The sack stood as a symbol for the small family farm in some ways - it was a means of conducting commerce from the countryside where the individual grower was still tied to its product.² Although very few sacks exist that are representative of this ideal, all sacks reflect an inherent desire to set one's grain apart through branding opportunities. With the coming of the railroad the sack still had a purpose, providing a container for the seed or grain being purchased from a local merchant. It is just what the sack represents that changed: first, the farm, and later, the distributor.

With no deep research available on the production, distribution and use of feedbags (sacks, bags, flour sacks, etc.), I embarked on my initial research process broadly, first seeking out physical sack samples to examine, then focusing more heavily on the Bemis Brothers Bag Company. This took me to various historical societies across the Midwest region including: the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library and Museum in Ames, Iowa, the State Historical Society of Iowa in Iowa City, the Wisconsin Historical Society in Madison, the Minnesota Historical Society in St. Paul, and the Geneseo Historical Museum in Geneseo, Illinois.

The earliest of sacks were labeled with a simple stenciling system because of their coarse weave. Burlap potato sacks are still printed using this method. However, as the sack's purpose expanded from a way of transferring ownership rights from farmer to merchant, and as the railroad allowed for the movement of larger quantities of grain, branding took higher priority. Rather than just simply purchasing pre-printed sacks, grain producers sought



Figure 1: Feed sack from mid-to-late 1800's for Bonaparte Mills of Meek & Bros. appears to have been made by the M. & D. P. White, Keokuk Bag Factory of Keokuk, Iowa. (State Historical Museum of Iowa, Des Moines)

methods of printing that could add additional embellishment to set brands apart. Well into the early 1900s one can find examples of sacks printed from wood type. Eventually this was surpassed by a stereotypes, which make use of rubber plates cast from composed type or an original image generated by a wood engraver.³

An examination of the Bemis Bros. Bag Company reveals much about the manufacturing process of sacks overall, from textile to paper to ink. Much like the granaries and mills, textile bag manufacturing plants were located near

continued on page 12



Figure 2: “Bemis A Seamless” bag was a mass-manufactured bag ordered from catalogues like Montgomery Ward & Co. to be used over and over again on the farm. The coarser weave of this bag indicates it would most likely have been used for threshed grains, rather than flour or fine seed. (State Historical Museum of Iowa, Des Moines)

major shipping routes and waterways. The waterway was not only still central to commerce, but also provided power for textile and paper mills which Bemis also owned and operated in order to supply themselves with the necessary raw material to produce their bags in large quantities. An inspection of the *Bemis 1959 Cotton Handbook* for employees tells us that Bemis was in control of every aspect of production: textile and paper production, mixing printing inks, branding, engraving, printing inks, art and brand design, engraving, printing, sewing, distribution – allowing the company to keep costs down and be an aggressive competitor across the country.

Focusing on the late 19th to mid 20th Century, early issues of *Bemistory* have a lot to tell us about the printing of the sacks during the 1940s and 1950s. Moving quickly from a stencil-based to relief-based process, the advent of the cylinder press irrevocably changed the volume at which anything could be printed. However, the exact process and presses used for textile bag manufacturing in particular remains unclear, and the move from textile bag to paper bag is quite swift. It is also important to note that this transition from textile to paper coincides with the larger trend of using wood, perceived then as an abundant and versatile raw material.

Bemistory confirms that there was an engraving department, the engravings were then cast as curved

rubber and metal plates, known as stereotypes, and these plates were mounted to cylinder presses for printing. Various company publications discussing the progression of the industry from textile to paper discuss the great efficiency and versatility the “offset reroll press” offered in handling textiles. That said, there is no real understanding of what an offset reroll press refers to. However, all photographs of pressmen and presswomen confirm they were indeed offset cylinder presses.

In the Museum of History and Industry in Seattle, Washington are found the Bemis Company Records from 1904-1994, which correspond to the presence of the ninth Bemis Bros. Bag Company branch located in Seattle during that time. This particular collection reveals that Bemis Bros. used C.B. Cottrell & Sons presses,⁴ in particular their web presses.⁵ An inspection of company blueprints, as well as a series of *Factory Ideas* sheds light on the many modifications done to the presses in-house.⁶ As a printer I have considered what implications these modifications to C.B. Cottrell & Sons web presses may have had on industries using the press outside of the textile bag industry.

When posed a question about this history of printing we defer immediately to the history of newspaper printing or paper printing in general. When the question concerns textile printing we think cotton fabrics and woodblocks and the calico press. How then do we address a history that lies at the intersection of both paper and textile industries? Even more so how can we consider the possibility that such a poorly documented sect of print/manufacturing could have been responsible for innovations that impacted the printing industry overall / outside the confines of the packaging plant’s walls? While the accumulation of facts on this subject at this time is inconclusive, it is clear that the agricultural textile sack demands critical examination of the documents and artifacts and their dialogue with the larger discourse with print, agricultural, and cultural history.



Figure 3: Detail of the early Bemis Bag Company logo, the “cat-in-the-bag” was used until 1964 when the company became Bemis Bros. Bag Company. (State Historical Museum of Iowa, Des Moines)

Endnotes

- ¹ William Cronon explains in *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* that "[agricultural textile sacks] were the key to the whole water-based transportation system. ... Once embarked on the river passage, sacks offered a convenient solution to the problem of loading the irregular holds of flatboats, keelboats, and steamboats." (Cronon 108)
- ² "Beyond [the] purely physical problems of water-based grain handling, the prevailing apparatus for transferring ownership rights also worked in favor of the sac system. Shippers and their customers wanted to know exactly what they were selling and buying, so it made sense not to break up individual shipments or mix them with others. ... The water-based grain-marketing system at midcentury was thus designed to move wheat, corn, and other cereal crops without disrupting the link between grain as physical object and grain as salable commodity." (Cronon 109)
- ³ Confirmation of this can be found in Rob Roy Kelly's *American Wood Type 1828-1900* where he states "bag companies required huge inventories of wood type in their business well into the first 20 or 30 years of the twentieth century. Because printing coarse bag fabrics directly from wood type reduced the life of the type substantially, late in the nineteenth century most companies would lock up the form of wood type and make a mat from which they cast a rubber plate to print from. The resilience of the rubber afforded a better imprint than would have been possible with either wood or metal. Many of the colorful flour and feed bags of several generations ago were printed in some part with wood type supplemented by the work of the wood engraver." (Kelly 189)
- ⁴ Founded in Westerly, Rhode Island in 1855, they specialized in oscillating printing presses, and in particular received a patent for the rotary printing press.



Figure 4: Bemis all rayon bag for Capital Brand Red Clover seed from Standard Seed Company in Des Moines, Iowa. The absence of the cat-in-the-bag logo would indicate this bag was made after 1964. (State Historical Museum of Iowa, Des Moines)



Figure 5: Image of the stereotype and rubber plate department in the Bemis plant in Seattle, on November 30, 1926 (Bemis Company Records, Museum of History and Industry, Seattle)

- ⁵ A web press is a type of offset press, wherein an inked image is transferred, or offset, onto a rubber blanket and then that is imprinted onto the substrate, which is fed through the press as a long ream of material. Most of the information available on web presses pertains to its use in printing newspapers or other paper-based items.
- ⁶ *Factory Ideas* were just that; ideas generated by workers in various departments of Bemis Bros. Bag Company plants. The company believed workers often had the best ideas for improvements in machine efficiency and overall plant operation. If an idea was viable, they would be sent to higher ups, and if deemed favorable, the change would be implemented in their plants across the country. For example, idea #147 in 1943 from the engineering department outlines a suggestion for a "mechanism...for use in transferring brands to engraving rubber while the rubber is curved around a cylinder". This would pertain to the stereotype department as well as the print department.

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She is a recipient of the 2013 Caxton Club Grant, the 2014 artist-in-residence for the TRANSIT outbound program with the Hamilton Wood Type & Printing Museum, and former Print Production Fellow for the *Journal of Artists Books*. She holds a B.F.A. from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. A native Midwesterner, her practice examines the history of agriculture, industry and culture in rural America.

Star-Spangled Turkeys: *Patriotism in Thanksgiving Postcards*

BY DANIEL GIFFORD, PH.D.

Collectors of holiday postcards are very familiar with a particular strain of Thanksgiving card that can be equal parts amusing and beguiling—the patriotic Thanksgiving postcard (figure 1). Set among traditional Thanksgiving images such as cornucopias and turkey dinners, there is a surprisingly diverse visual language of nationalism printed and embossed onto these rectangular artifacts: flags, banners, stars, stripes, eagles, shields, red/white/blue color schemes, and personifications of nationhood like Uncle Sam. And while flags and Uncle Sam pop up for other holidays as well, such as Christmas or even Easter, Thanksgiving has an enormous (almost forceful) outpouring of patriotic iconography inserted into the visual narrative of postcards. Which raises an interesting and basic question: Why?

A significant part of the answer rests with an understanding of holiday postcard audiences of the early 20th century. At the peak of their popularity billions of postcards were circulating through post office networks, across informal exchanges between networks of kin and friends, and into boxes and albums. Holiday postcards were a significant portion of this craze; however, my

research into holiday postcard audiences revealed that this national fad was actually less national than we might think. In fact, there were certain key constituencies that were enjoying the fad in disproportionate numbers. One of those most important groups was rural and small town Americans, particularly living in the Northern half of the country, New England most of all.

As one article on the flow of mail into and out from New York City put it: “Uncle Sam never before reaped as rich a harvest as the result of the post card fad during this Easter season. Out of town trains have carried here 40 per cent more than the average amount of mail, and have taken back [i.e. from the country to the city] *even a larger percentage of increase.*”¹ In the words of one exasperated postcard dealer in Waterloo, Iowa: “We have tried for a long time to drum it into the heads of the producers of post cards that a majority of the business is done in country towns...”² And one man who didn’t need it “drummed into his head” was Mr. Peter De Graw, Fourth Assistant Postmaster, the man in charge of the Rural Free Delivery. Writing his annual report for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1909, De Graw concluded that the rural free delivery routes had seen





Figure 2

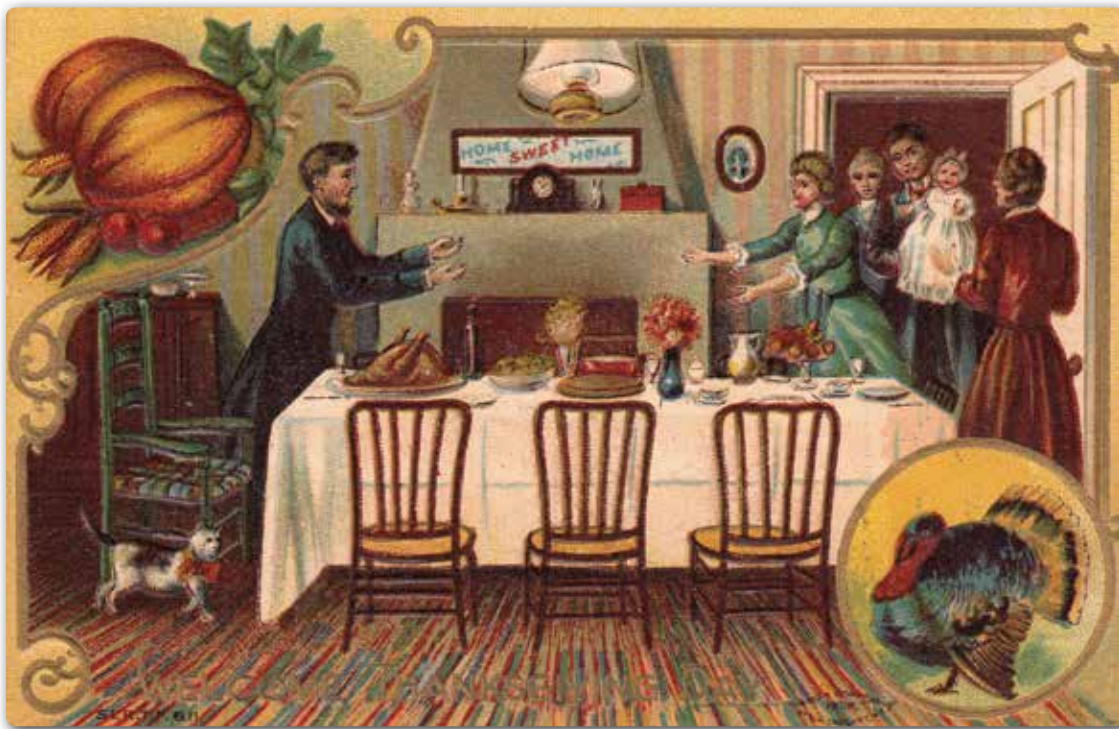


Figure 3

a 96% increase in the amount of mail handled, an increase that could be attributed “especially to letters and postal cards, the latter due to the enormous use of souvenir and picture postcards.”³

So if we start with the assumption that rural Americans in particular were buying, sending, and saving these Thanksgiving postcards—notably in numbers disproportionate to their size within the American

population—we must next turn to questions of motivation and cause. Why was the linkage of patriotism and Thanksgiving so popular to these audiences? To look at the postcards themselves, it is easy to imagine this group living in a bucolic golden age of prosperity and bounty. In fact, history reveals a very different narrative.

The years of the postcard phenomenon coincide exactly with the rise of the Country Life Movement. The Country



Figure 4

Life Movement grew from an assortment of reformers, government officials, urban elites (both business and cultural), and educators who saw a variety of issues plaguing rural America. These forces' greatest platform began to coalesce in late 1907 and eventually became President Roosevelt's Country Life Commission. The Commission was to study the problems of rural America and to recommend solutions. Various preoccupied with everything from the depletion of soil to the use of farm machinery, it was the flow of the rural young to cities and the imagined disappearance of America's moral and rejuvenative center that was the movement's greatest concern. These anxieties were further exacerbated by waves of new immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe who seemed to be encroaching not only on cities, but rural populations as well. When the Commission delivered its report in 1909, the recommendations broadly centered around three institutions—the school, the church, and cooperative associations (or lack thereof).

Rural and small town Americans (the two were consistently linked) did not meekly acquiesce to the charges that they were failing themselves and their country, and were in need of a series of Progressive "fixes." Thus, not surprisingly, a lively print debate ensued in which words were chosen to describe and imagine the rural world (primary in newspaper and magazine stories about the Commission and its work), while other printed materials provided counter re-imaginings of the same (primarily



Figure 5

in agricultural periodicals and sympathetic magazines). One crafted the notion of a rural America plagued with problems; the other resisted and challenged those assumptions. But most importantly for postcards and the historians who study them, this textual battle did not stand alone, but coincided with a timely explosion of images on postcards—postcards that we know circulated primarily outside of cities.

Consider this typical Thanksgiving postcard (figure 2). Here a family gathers in the kitchen to prepare for Thanksgiving. The kitchen is huge, with enough room for five people, a cat, heaps of produce, and still plenty of floor space to spare. Dressed in crisp, well-made clothing, the family, particularly the women, could be mistaken for urban middle-class ladies, but the signifiers of their surroundings place this house and its inhabitants firmly on the farm: the barn outside the door, the freshly killed turkey being brought in (rather than a plucked and dressed one from market), the produce in baskets rather than cans or jars, suggesting it was just harvested. The scene speaks to the family's well being, with good clothes, a large house, and proper indications of middle-class taste such as wallpaper, a clock, and a vase of flowers. The food itself also signifies prosperity—the piles of corn and pumpkins are greater than the five could ever eat in a single meal, while the turkey is nearly as big as his executioner. The man's hand rests on the food, indicating that the bounty is *his* property and the product of *his* labor. The message for a "hearty" Thanksgiving further emphasizes the role of food as central to the day—food that comes from this most important of men: the farmer.

This consistent idealization of the rural home, farm, and landscape formed the core foundation for most Thanksgiving postcards. For New Englanders especially who could claim imagined links to the original Pilgrims of the first Thanksgiving mythology, it was an especially comforting visual message (figure 3). The postcard phenomenon allowed these audiences to construct the farmer and his wife—surrogates for a larger, proud, rural collective—as the central, idealized, mythologized masters and mistresses of one of America's most important holidays. From there it is easy to understand how patriotism crept into the picture. In fact, it becomes the next logical step.

Take the familiar idealized rural landscape (what could otherwise be a stand-alone image) and insert into it some sort of patriotic iconography, such as a banner of red, white, and blue or a small shield in the corner. Even these small changes carried important messages for those circulating these images. The message of the mythically rural, paired with the patriotic, was a nod to the interplay of both, the marriage that elevated the rural landscape to national importance. Quite often these scenes veered into the realm of the fantastic, with turkeys pulling chariots and carts made of flowers, vegetables, and gold while young boys hold the reins (figure 4). Other times the turkey would be ridden like a horse, or might be carried into the scene by cart, basket, or carriage. As silly as these images



Figure 6

are, they still advance certain ideological messages. The consumption of a turkey dinner is preceded by fantasies that linked rural abundance to citizenship. Flag-waving children representing idealized rural citizens deliver their turkeys and other fruits of bounty from the rural harvest (pumpkins, grapes, corn) to their fellow citizen-consumers who hold and view the postcard.

When Uncle Sam was brought into the picture it was a further enhancement of these themes (figure 5). That Uncle Sam stands in for the nation is understood—he is the ultimate citizen, encouraging the viewer to join in a celebration of national prosperity and abundance. That abundance is embodied in the turkey or other foodstuffs that emerge from the idealized rural landscape. It is no accident that these food images often grew to exaggerated and ridiculous proportions. Underproduction was yet another charge the Country Life Movement leveled against the American farmer. Gigantism was another way to visually refute such claims.

Once you embark on this sort of analytical journey, any number of visual themes can be better understood in historical context—themes relating to race, for example, or the nation's imperialist pursuits during this era. I conclude with one theme that particularly perplexed me when I



Figure 7

began the project. Thanksgiving is a holiday tradition dominated by female ritual, skill, and creativity. In fact, we collectively changed the famous poem to “over the river and through the woods to Grandmother’s house we go” (it was Grandfather’s house in the original) precisely because Thanksgiving strikes us as so naturally feminized. So why is not the iconographic figure of Columbia used to embody larger messages relative to the strength and bounty of the nation on these patriotic Thanksgiving postcards? Certainly the trope of Columbia was readily available and recognizable to the period’s mass-viewing public. Yet among all the patriotic-themed Thanksgiving postcard images I have seen, only one depicted the feminine Columbia in the same role as Uncle Sam (figure 6) as a presenter of national bounty—not to mention all the eagles, boys, soldiers, sailors, or other male icons that embody the citizen consumer on patriotic postcards (figure 7).

The question can perhaps be answered partially by historical precedent. The male figure of Uncle Sam had a long career as the paternal embodiment of national prosperity, and by the early 20th century it may have been difficult to rethink an iconography that seemed so natural. Still, it was not as if audiences were unfamiliar with Columbia or would not have understood her as an

equivalent female depiction of the nation. So another, more historically-situated answer seems necessary. With suffrage hotly debated in the period of postcard use, the personification of the nation as a woman carried politically-charged implications. Pageants, plays, and tableaux in support of suffrage often employed the Columbia character, such as when the entire Metropolitan Opera Company came to Washington DC for a suffrage procession in 1913, with famed opera singer Lillian Nordica posing as Columbia on the Department of Treasury steps. The conservative audiences of postcards (German women typically showed lackluster support for suffrage—and were another core demographic of the postcard phenomenon audience) might have preferred the reassuring and uncontroversial image of Uncle Sam.

Context matters. An image of a flag-waving turkey is amusing and delightful, but ultimately the image is an empty vessel without historical context. The same can be said for the entirety of holiday postcard output during the postcard craze. The images of that output are inextricably linked to the historical contexts that shaped them. The pairing of rural bounty and patriotism is one such example, and shows a group of Americans eager (perhaps even a little desperate) to lay and retain a claim to America’s moral, economic, and political core. It was the conflicts and tensions of this period in history that made these images so popular. It was the contested spaces of the early twentieth century that fed a need for affirmative, reassuring, and patriotic visuals that turned postcards into one of the largest visual phenomena of the century.

Endnotes

- ¹ “Easter Post Card Craze Swamps Gotham Offices,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 19, 1908, 6. (emphasis added)
- ² “Says Best End of the Business Comes from Small Country Merchants,” *Novelty News*, December 1911, 100.
- ³ “1909 Report of the Postmaster-General; Fourth Assistant—Rural Delivery,” in *Post Office Department Annual Report, 1909* (Washington, D.C: Government Printing Office, 1910). For more on this research and other forms of evidence see Daniel Gifford, *American Holiday Postcards, 1905-1915: Imagery and Context*. (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland Press, 2013).



Daniel Gifford is Manager of Museum Advisory Committees at the Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of American History. He is also a historian of American popular and visual culture. This article is excerpted in part from his *American Holiday Postcards, 1905-1915: Imagery and Context* (McFarland Press, 2013)

Christmas Greetings from Southern California

BY JULIE STIRES

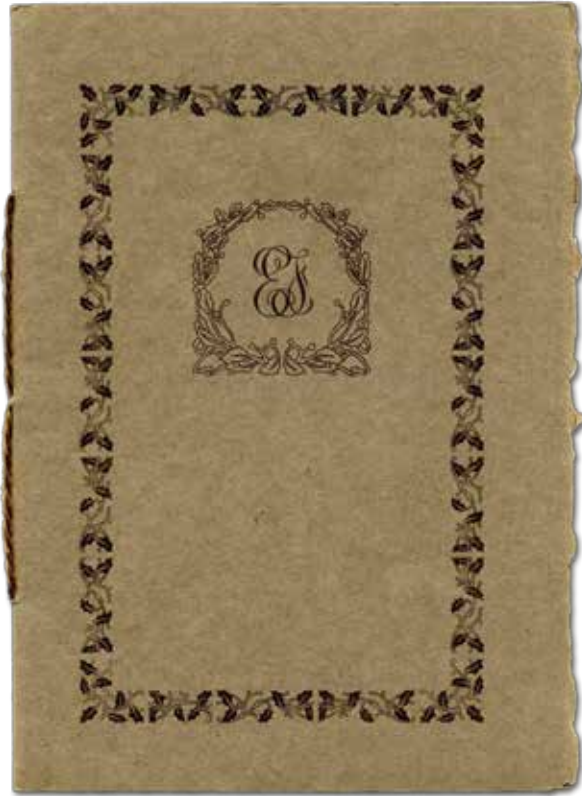


Figure 1: Christmas card (front), n.d., 15 x 10.5 cm. (Courtesy Pasadena Museum of History Archives, FCP.150.1)

Some very remarkable Christmas cards created by artists living in 1920s Southern California escaped the post holiday tradition of being tossed into the dustbin, because Eva Scott Fenyes (1849-1930) collected and saved them in scrapbooks. Beautiful, clever, and revelatory of creative minds, the cards that Eva preserved continue to enchant and inform. An artist herself, Eva, who made a home in Pasadena, California (today preserved as Pasadena Museum of History's Fenyes Mansion) from 1896 until her death in 1930, shared friendship and artistic pursuit with the artists represented here. In fact she had many artist friends in California and New Mexico, and she was clearly appreciating their distinctiveness and talent when she dedicated two scrapbooks to their very personal greeting card creations. Eva wrote on the front flyleaves of her scrapbooks, "Cards designed and in some cases executed by friends or their friends" and "Original Xmas Cards." The Christmas greetings shown here are just a few of nearly two hundred cards she preserved, all of which inform our understanding of the Fenyes family's artistic and social milieu.

When Eva and her second husband, physician and entomologist Adalbert Fenyes (1863-1937), moved to

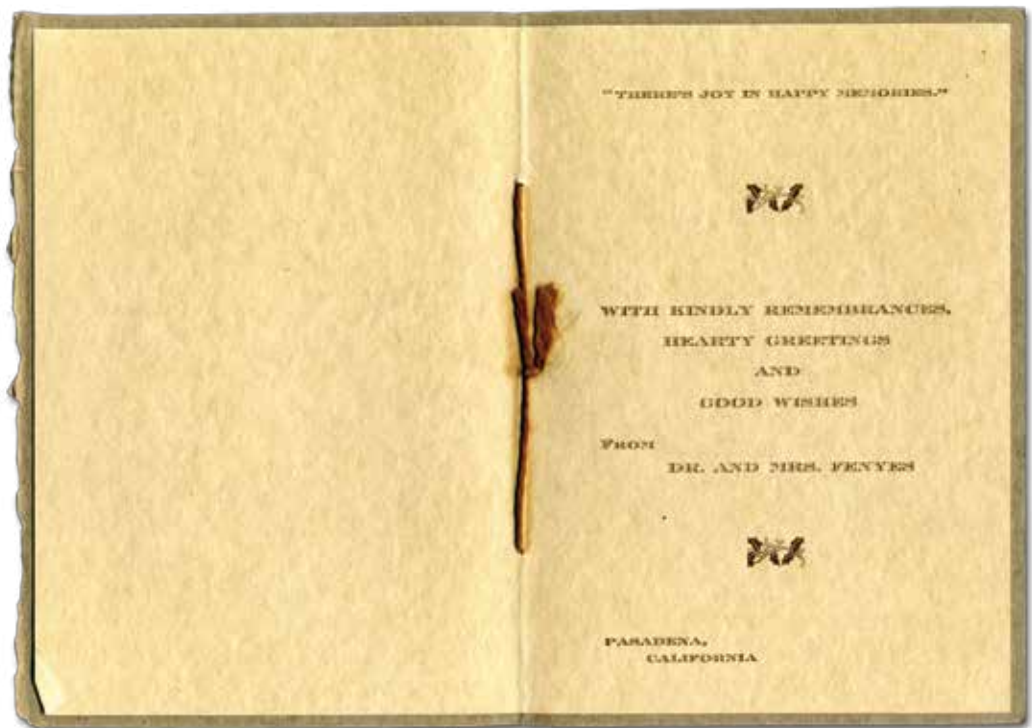


Figure 2: Interior of the card in Figure 1.

continued on page 20

Pasadena at the turn of the 20th century, the Brown brothers, Benjamin (1865-1942) and Howell (1880-1954), also new to Pasadena, joined their circle of new acquaintances and soon became friends, long time friends as reflected in the Fenyes family papers. One Christmas, the exact year is not known, artist and printmaker Howell C. Brown created an etching of the Fenyes Mansion loggia, prints of which Eva and Adalbert slipped into each of their Christmas cards (Figures 1, 2, 3)

Eva and Adalbert's friendship with artist John Hubbard Rich (1876-1954) can be traced back to 1908 when Eva started saving receipts for her art lessons with Rich. She paid one dollar per session. Receipts, newspaper clippings, and letters collected in the Fenyes family papers inform the many years of their social and professional relationship with Rich. Friend, student, and patron, Eva commissioned Rich to paint reproductions of her colonial ancestors' formal portraits.¹ These



Figure 3: Brown, Howell C. (1880-1954). A Corner of Our Home, n.d. Etching, 13.8 x 10 cm. Included with the card in Figure 1. Artistic license or etching error? The image is actually a mirror image of the actual loggia.



Figure 4: John Hubbard Rich (1876-1954), Christmas card, 1928. Print, 8.3 x 13.3 cm. (FCP.52.2)



Figure 5: John Hubbard Rich (1876-1954), Christmas card, 1929. Print, 9.2 x 11.5 cm. (FCP.52.2)

portraits, as well as the originals he painted of Eva and her family, hang today in the Fenyes Mansion. These were serious artistic endeavors, but Eva must also have delighted in Rich's humorous nature. The Christmas cards she collected show the playful side of Rich's talent. (Figures 4, 5)

The Gearhart sisters of Pasadena, Frances (1869-1958), May (1872-1951), and Edna (1879-1974) were teachers and artists. Little is known of the sisters' relationship with Eva and Adalbert, but Edna's letters to Eva's granddaughter Leonora Curtin Paloheimo in the 1950s suggest a longstanding friendship with the family.² Edna and Frances, but particularly Frances, are still recognized for their beautiful color woodblock prints. Yet, the word



beautiful barely describes the images Frances created for these two Gearhart family Christmas cards. (Figures 6, 7, 8, 9)

Lesser know artist Helen Fowler (1902-1975) was a contemporary and friend of Eva Fenyes' granddaughter, Leonora Curtin Paloheimo, and in the 1920s Helen and Leonora traveled together in Hawaii.³ In the late 1920s Helen married William Bonzi, but the marriage ended in divorce.⁴ Years later in 1941, Leonora was Helen's maid of honor at her second marriage to Gwynne Allen of Altadena.⁵ During the 1950s Helen's paintings, drawings, and prints were shown at exhibitions sponsored by the Pasadena Society of Artists, San Gabriel Valley Artists, and the Jack Carr Gallery in South Pasadena. At the time she was painting under her maiden name, Helen Fowler.⁶ The 1929 Christmas card

Figures 6, 7, 8: Frances Gearhart (1869-1958), Christmas card (front, inside left, and inside right), 1925. Block print, 16.5 x 14 cm. (FCP.52.1)

shown here was sent by Helen and her first husband. (Figure 10)

Archive Connection:

Pasadena Museum of History Research Library & Archives is home to the Fenyes-Curtin-Paloheimo Papers from which these Christmas cards were selected. The papers are available for research during the Reading Room's public hours and by appointment. The Fenyes-Curtin-Paloheimo Papers finding aid is Internet accessible at the Online Archive of California.

Endnotes

- 1 Letters of John Hubbard Rich to Eva Scott Fenyes, 1908-1911, Fenyes-Curtin-Paloheimo Papers, FCP.30.28. Newspaper and magazine clippings, letter, sketch, photograph, FCP.55.2, FCP.55.3. Pasadena Museum of History Archives, Pasadena, California.
- 2 Correspondence, Edna Gearhart to Leonora Frances Curtin Paloheimo, 1953, 1957. Fenyes-Curtin-Paloheimo Papers, FCP.123.17.
- 3 Letter, Beulah Fowler to Leonora Scott Muse Curtin, n.d. Fenyes-Curtin-Paloheimo Papers, FCP.97.9. Beulah Fowler was Helen Fowler's mother. Leonora Scott Muse Curtin was the daughter of Eva Scott Fenyes and her first husband William Muse, and she was the mother of Leonora Frances Curtin Paloheimo.
- 4 United States Federal Census, 1930. United States Federal Census, 1940. Thurston's Pasadena City Directories, 1919-1934.
- 5 "Allen-Bonzi Vows Near," *Los Angeles Times*, 17 June 1941. Accessed Pasadena Public Library, Proquest, *Los Angeles Times*, historical.

- 6 “Art Events,” *Los Angeles Times*, 11 February 1951; “Art Events This Week,” *Los Angeles Times*, 15 March 1953; “Tea Will Honor Winning Artists,” *Los Angeles Times*, 9 May 1954; “San Gabriel Valley Exhibition on View,” *Los Angeles Times*, 10 October 1954; “Art Events Opening This Week,” *Los Angeles Times*, 10 October 1954; “Orient Motif Marks W.H. Rowes Jr. Fete,” *Los Angeles Times*, 11 October 1954; “Art Chatter,” *Los Angeles Times*, 14 October 1954. Accessed Pasadena Public Library, Proquest, *Los Angeles Times*, historical.



Figure 9: Frances Gearhart (1869-1958), Christmas card (inside right), 1929. Block print, 21 x 13.3 cm (FCP.52.2)

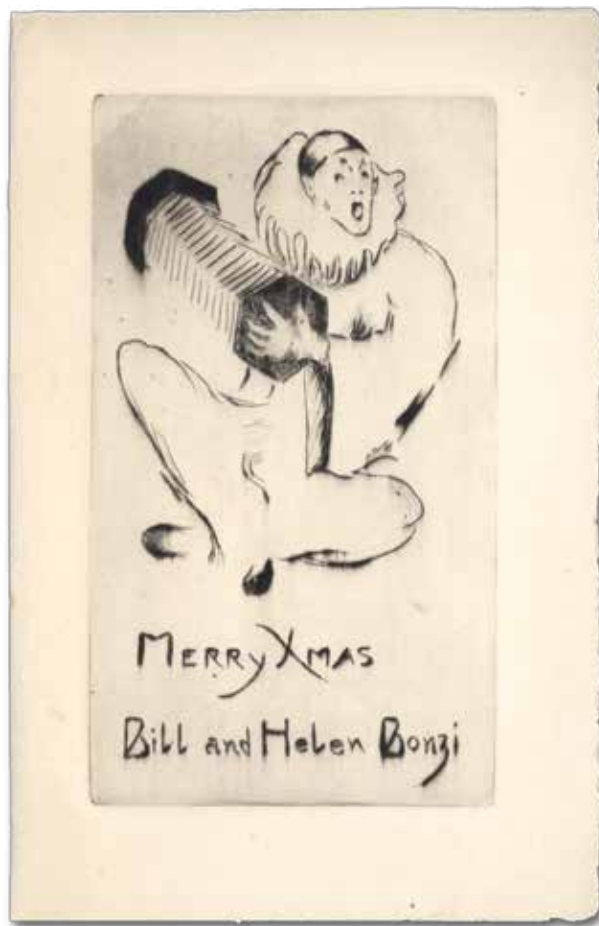


Figure 10: Helen Fowler (1902-1975), Christmas card, 1929. Print, 16.3 x 10.7 cm. (FCP.52.2)

Julie Stires is Project Archivist at the Pasadena Museum of History, who welcomed an Ephemera Society tour in February.

Speakers on the Fascinating Subjects of Ephemera

Event planners looking for experienced speakers on a variety of interesting and intriguing ephemera subjects will find an excellent roster of speakers available on the Society's website, www.ephemerasociety.org/resources/speakersbureau.html. On the same page is an application for being listed as a speaker.

JOIN THE SPEAKERS BUREAU

The Society invites members who enjoy speaking on ephemera subjects to join the Speakers Bureau and share their knowledge and enthusiasm with others.

Cartomancy

BY PAUL OSMAN

The following images show cards from an American deck of the 1920s that have been used for ‘cartomancy’ – a form of divination that has been practiced for over 400 years. Playing cards have a special allure because their exact origin remains open to debate: 9th Century China, or Mamluk tribesmen enslaved as soldiers by the Egyptians? The earliest surviving are Mamluk cards from the 14th century. A Royal French charter of 1392 mentions a Jacoman Grigonue paying 56 Parisian sous for the purchase of a deck of cards for the King of France – a princely sum.

Playing cards became associated with other vices that the church/state deemed immoral – gambling, drinking, fighting – hence the nickname ‘the Devil’s picture book.’ In 1423 Bologna, Saint Bernadine of Siena called for their burning en masse.

Divination and fortune-telling are more often associated with the Tarot – the earliest surviving deck from Northern Italy around 1470. There has always been speculation about the significance of the numbers and symbols of both the playing card and Tarot pack mirroring calendar systems: 52 cards/weeks in a year; 4 suits/seasons; 13 cards per suit/lunar cycles per

year. Divination theories proliferated toward the end of the 19th century, perhaps as an antidote to scientific rationalism (Darwin’s *Origin of the Species* first published in 1859) or the shortcomings of conventional religious doctrine.

The practice of reading a standard deck, such as this one, as if it were a Tarot was not uncommon. It was rumored that Napoleon’s first wife, Josephine de Beauharnais, was an advocate. The ‘fortunes’ are similar to Jungian ‘archetypes’ – universals in human psychology that transcend race, nation, time and place.

Whether these cards were used sincerely, for amusement, or for making profit through flattering interpretations, they are an example of the connection of the material world of objects with the abstract world of ideas; their untold secrets remain their greatest appeal.

Paul Osman is a self-taught artist, who uses photography as a medium to measure distances between ourselves. His work may be seen at the website: mudandgold.com.



Building a Boycott, One Bumper Sticker at a Time: *Coors Boycott Ephemera, 1977-1978*

BY ALLYSON P. BRANTLEY



Figure 1: "Boycott Coors" Bumper Sticker. Courtesy of the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society.

In October 1977, New York Times columnist Francine du Plessix Gray derided social activists of the seventies as distracted, atomized, and a far cry from the radicalism of their long-haired sixties antecedents. To Gray, the quintessential example of the decade's waning militancy was the boycott of Coors beer. "Boycott Coors bumper stickers have replaced antiwar or environmental slogans on their cars," she wrote, adding: "(If you can't win the big battles, ' so the rationale goes, 'win the small ones.')" Gray thus saw a consumer campaign of the likes of the Coors boycott as small and inconsequential. Activism in the seventies had become, in her estimation, reduced to a short message on a yellow bumper sticker (figure 1).

Research for my ongoing dissertation project — on those very bumper stickers and boycotters — suggests otherwise. Boycott ephemera played important roles in building a diverse coalition in opposition to the Coors Brewing Company, a coalition *Time* termed "a formidable, if somewhat incongruous alliance of activists." Boycott materials, from stickers to comic books, educated the consuming public and captured its attention. Through the work of ephemera and skilled organizers, a boycott movement was built from both the bottom-up and top-down, one beer drinker at a time. The boycott became about much more than beer, however, for it also tapped into growing anxieties and debates about labor, business, and politics in the 1970s. By boycotting Coors, supporters believed they were fighting for human rights and

challenging the business conservatism that the Coors family and company embodied.

By the time Gray saw "Boycott Coors" affixed to bumpers across the country, the boycott had been running on and off for over a decade. Coors, established in 1873 in Golden, Colorado, was often criticized (and boycotted) by minority and labor activists for alleged employment discrimination, entrenched anti-unionism, and — by the 1970s — the political conservatism of Bill and Joe Coors, the third-generation leaders of the company. In 1969, Mexican-Americans launched a boycott, protesting the company's limited minority hiring. And in San Francisco, Teamsters, Mexican-Americans, and gay and lesbian activists launched another boycott of the beer in 1974, rooted in labor disputes with a local Coors distributor and charges that the Coors family supported anti-gay organizations. Others targeted the beer after public revelations of Joe Coors's links to the New Right, which included support for Ronald Reagan's 1976 primary run and Coors's instrumental role in launching the conservative think-tank, the Heritage Foundation.

These early boycotts gave way to a national movement in the late 1970s, as brewery workers at Coors launched what would be a twenty-one month strike on April 5, 1977. Members of Brewery Workers Local 366 walked out not over wages, but rather, labor-management power struggles and privacy concerns (especially Coors's use of pre-employment polygraph tests). To build support for their strike — a strike they cast as for "human rights" and against a powerful anti-union and conservative company — the union also initiated a boycott. Strikers and boycott materials soon scattered across the West and Southwest to organize their campaign against Coors beer.

Boycott leaders could not simply scream "Don't Buy Coors Beer!" — but had to effectively sell the boycott to diverse activists and consumers. Boycotters worked to compel consumers to not buy Coors by catering to the public's

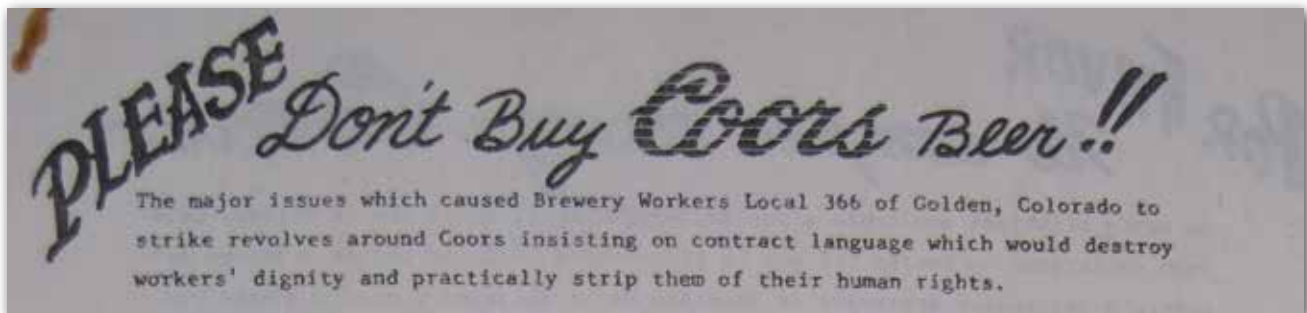


Figure 2: "Don't Buy Coors Beer" Leaflet Header. Courtesy of the Auraria Library Archives and Special Collections, Denver, Colorado.

Figure 3: “No Compre Coors” Bumper Sticker. Courtesy of the Auraria Library Archives and Special Collections, Denver, Colorado.

desires and anxieties and making their slogan well-known. To do so, Local 366 launched a multi-pronged campaign that included speeches to community organizations; press releases; informational pickets; and a flood of English and Spanish leaflets, packets, bumper stickers, comic books, t-shirts, and records, to both inform consumers and quickly make lasting impressions. These focused on three key narratives: 1) Coors’s human rights abuses, which included discriminatory hiring practices, probing sexual questions on polygraph tests, and the company’s record of union-busting; 2) the Coors family’s conservatism and links to the New Right; 3) and the quality of Coors beer, which was not pasteurized and “unsafe” when made by permanent replacements.

Boycott ephemera ranged from the informative and detailed to the pithy and, at times, sensational. Some double-sided, bilingual leaflets clearly laid out reasons to boycott with salient examples (figure 2). Bumper stickers, so disdained in *The New York Times*, were also an important component



Figure 4: “Will Rogers Never Met Joe Coors” Bumper Sticker. Courtesy of the Denver Public Library, Western History Collection, MSS WH 1991

of boycott leaders’ strategy. Colorful stickers, in English and Spanish, reading “Boycott Coors!,” “Coors Beer: Not Pasteurized,” or “Will Rogers Never Met Joe Coors” bolstered the work of leaflets, newspaper articles, marches, and pickets with their ubiquity (figures 3, 4). Other leaflets, and one comic book entitled, *Boycott Coors Beer: Brewed With Pure Rocky Mountain Scab Labor*, detailed human rights abuses and, to further jar consumers into action, often utilized Nazi imagery to paint Coors as tyrannical (figure 5).

Materials, from bumper stickers to provocative leaflets, and on-the-ground organizing together built a diverse movement that was at once collective and individual, and compelled beer drinkers, feminists, Mexican-Americans, gays and lesbians, and youth activists to reject Coors. Supporters boycotted to fight back against employment practices and politics with which they disagreed, such as anti-unionism and the New Right. And the movement did, indeed, hinder Coors’

sales. By January 1978, sales in California, Oklahoma, New Mexico, and Utah were down nearly twenty-five percent.

“Boycott Coors” bumper stickers were thus part of a broad, politicized consumer movement, and though it looked different than the antiwar marches of the sixties, the fight they publicized was far from inconsequential. The boycott, in fact, well outlived the strike (which ended with the union’s decertification in December 1978) and was not officially settled until 1987.

And even today, one might catch a glimpse of a faded “Boycott Coors” sticker on a rusted bumper, a fleeting reminder of a driver’s boycotting past.

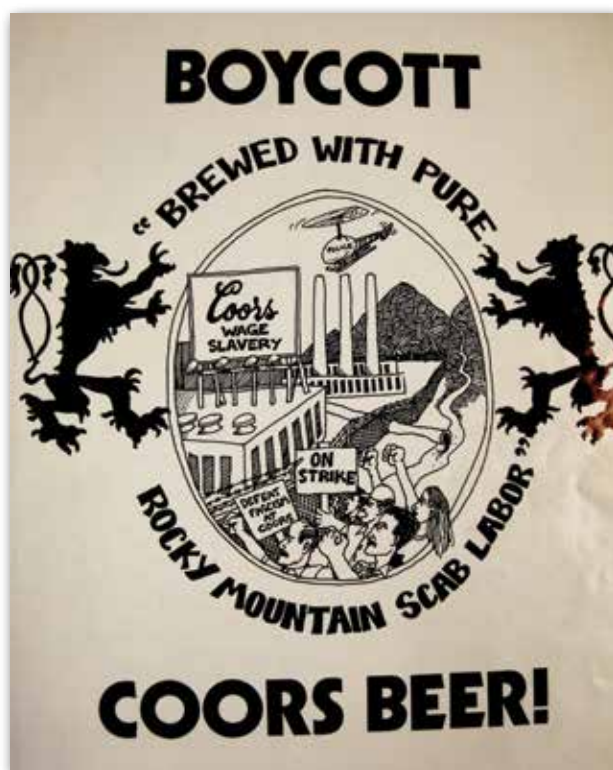


Figure 5: “Boycott Coors Beer: Brewed with Pure Rocky Mountain Scab Labor” Title Page. Courtesy of the Auraria Library Archives and Special Collections, Denver, Colorado.

Allyson P. Brantley is a Ph.D. candidate in history at Yale University, who did her undergraduate work at the University of Notre Dame.

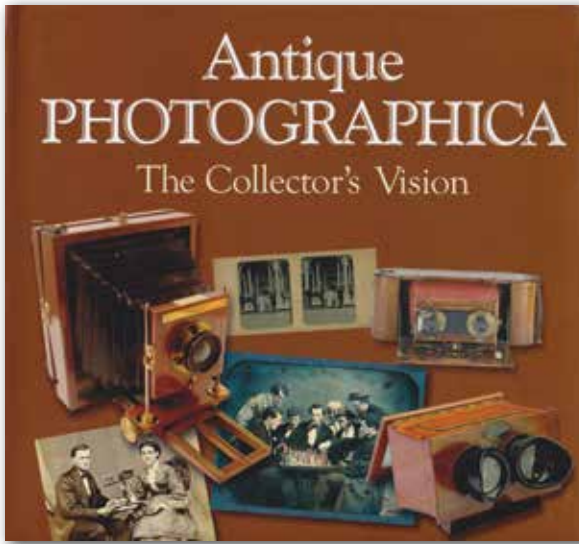
Interesting Books

Playing Cards in Photographs

by Laurence Lubliner
(Squashpublishing.com, \$35, 96 pages, hardbound, 100 B&W photographs) is an entertaining picture book of a long-time collector's trove of unusual snapshots, tintypes, cabinet cards, postcards, stereo views, and publicity shots that show the whole gamut of playing cards in our culture. From staged studio portraits (an 1860 couple, an 1890 grandmother and small boy) to hilarious costumes, from movie stills to battlefields to contemporary cardstackers, it is surprising how ubiquitous was the playing card as a motif and a pastime. A good introductory chapter introduces major playing card manufacturers in America.



A more substantial coffee table book from passionate collectors is *Antique Photographica: The Collector's Vision* edited by Bryan & Page Ginns (Schifferbooks.com, \$70, 288 pages hardbound, 567 B&W and color photographs). Ephemera Society Board Member Jeremy Rowe contributed to two chapters: with Hugh Tiffit, "Autochromes: It's a Colorful World" and "Photographic



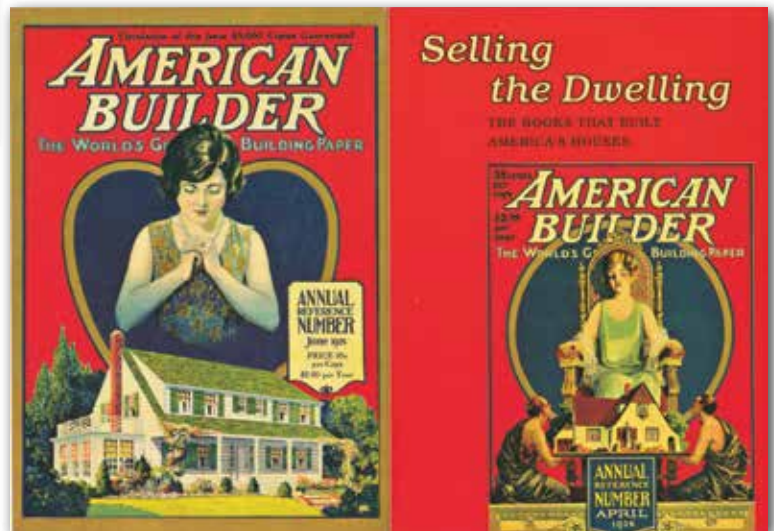
Postcards: Windows to the 20th century." As with the other 14 chapters, these subjects are covered with excellent reproductions of rare photographs as well as images of hardware (the Durbonet deluxe dioscope viewer, for instance), and informative footnoted text that will serve well as reference. Chapters on tintypes, cartes de visites, daguerreotypes, stereoviews, and cameras are solid contributions to the field, but even more welcome are those on lesser known photographica: the Camera Obscura, Stanhopes, magic lanterns (by Richard Balzer, who has presented to the Ephemera Society), and

Cyanotypes. Michael Pritchard adds a nice trans-Atlantic flavor with chapters on British cameras and photographic trade catalogues 1839 to 1939.

Selling the Dwelling: The Books that Built America's Houses, 1775-2000

by Society member Richard Cheek (The Grolier Club, 288 pages, hardbound, 600 color photographs,

OakKnoll.com \$50) is a very beautiful record of both a fine 2013 exhibit at The Grolier Club and of an important research collection. Arranged in chronological chapters (from builder's guides in the New Republic to the demise of the house plan book) the text provides a history both of American architecture and taste and of the printed works (most of them ephemeral) that guided builders. The excellent illustrations are presented, often full size, with descriptive captions, and source information is in an appendix along with a good bibliography. The range of ephemera is impressive: signs and plans, brochures and catalogues, bookplates and samplers, and even dollhouses, jigsaw puzzles and other architectural toys along with their advertising. Wherever



possible, the collector has included photographs he has taken of houses that reflect the styles shown. I live in an early 20th century kit house and was particularly interested in the chapter “Smaller Homes for the Millions: Plans by Mail or Houses by Rail” – my Western yellow pine pre-cut woodwork was shipped on the Harlem Railroad from New York and local builders added the heavier components such as stone foundation, plaster walls, and slate roof according to the plans purchased from a Washington State millwork company. This book shows



the variety of options available to homeseekers in that period, along with illustration of how quickly the actual building was accomplished. A fine chapter, conceptually, embraces World War II and the introduction of modernism: “The Homes We Fought For: Modern or Traditional?” Featured is *Life* magazine’s coverage of the 1939-40 New York World’s Fair contest between eight modern and seven traditional home models. Designed by Julia Sedykh, this book, limited to 1500 copies, will be a classic.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

In an effort to provide events in a more timely fashion, all Calendar listings will now be included in the eNews and available online at: www.ephemerasociety.org/events.html

Please email calendar listings to:
diane@ephemerasociety.org

New Members

We welcome the following new members who have joined the Society since publication of our May issue.

Allyson Brantley
Yale University
100 Howe St., #601
New Haven, CT 06511

Tanya Brassie
University of Texas
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Rey Craig
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New Albany, IN 47150

Kira Dietz
*Virginia Tech - Special Collections
Univ Libraries*
560 Drillfield Drive
Blacksburg, VA 24061

Donald Herndon
8313 NW 102
Oklahoma City, OK 73162

Jonathan Hoch
149 Tower Road
Lincoln, MA 01773

Robert W. Hoffman
5315 N. Delaware Street
Indianapolis, IN 46220

Dawn Kim
13 Russell Street, Apt. #1
Brooklyn, NY 11222

Kiplinger Research Library
*Historical Society of Washington,
DC*
801 K Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001

Jaime Margalotti
University of Delaware
181 S. College Ave.
Newark, DE 19717

Richard Murian
Alcuin Books
4242 N. Scottsdale Road
Scottsdale, AZ 85251

Jim & Antoinette Mussells
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Oakland, CA 94601

Gregory Pulis
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Los Angeles, CA 90064

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East Stroudsburg, PA 18301

David Sullivan
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New York, NY 10019

Steve Swain
5 Meeting Street
Roswell, GA 30075

Sandra Wood
Americana and Antiques
2225 Three Bridge RD
Powhatan, VA 23139

Wyatt Yon
2931-36th Street
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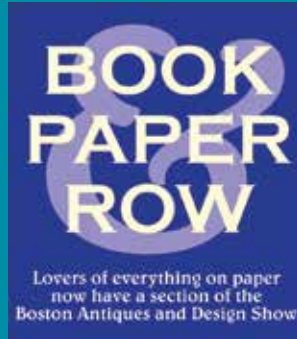


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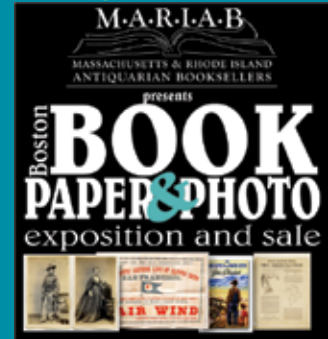
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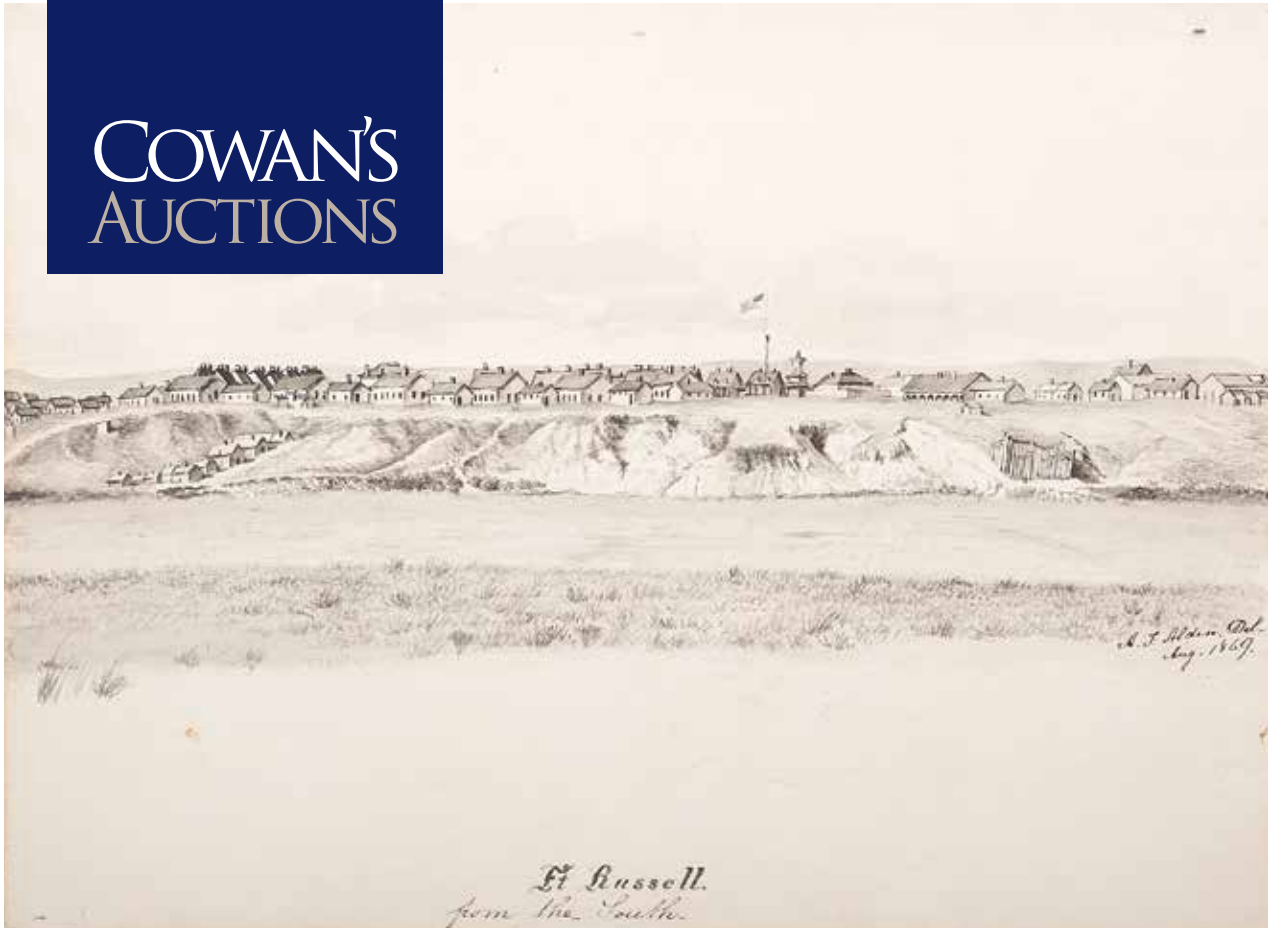
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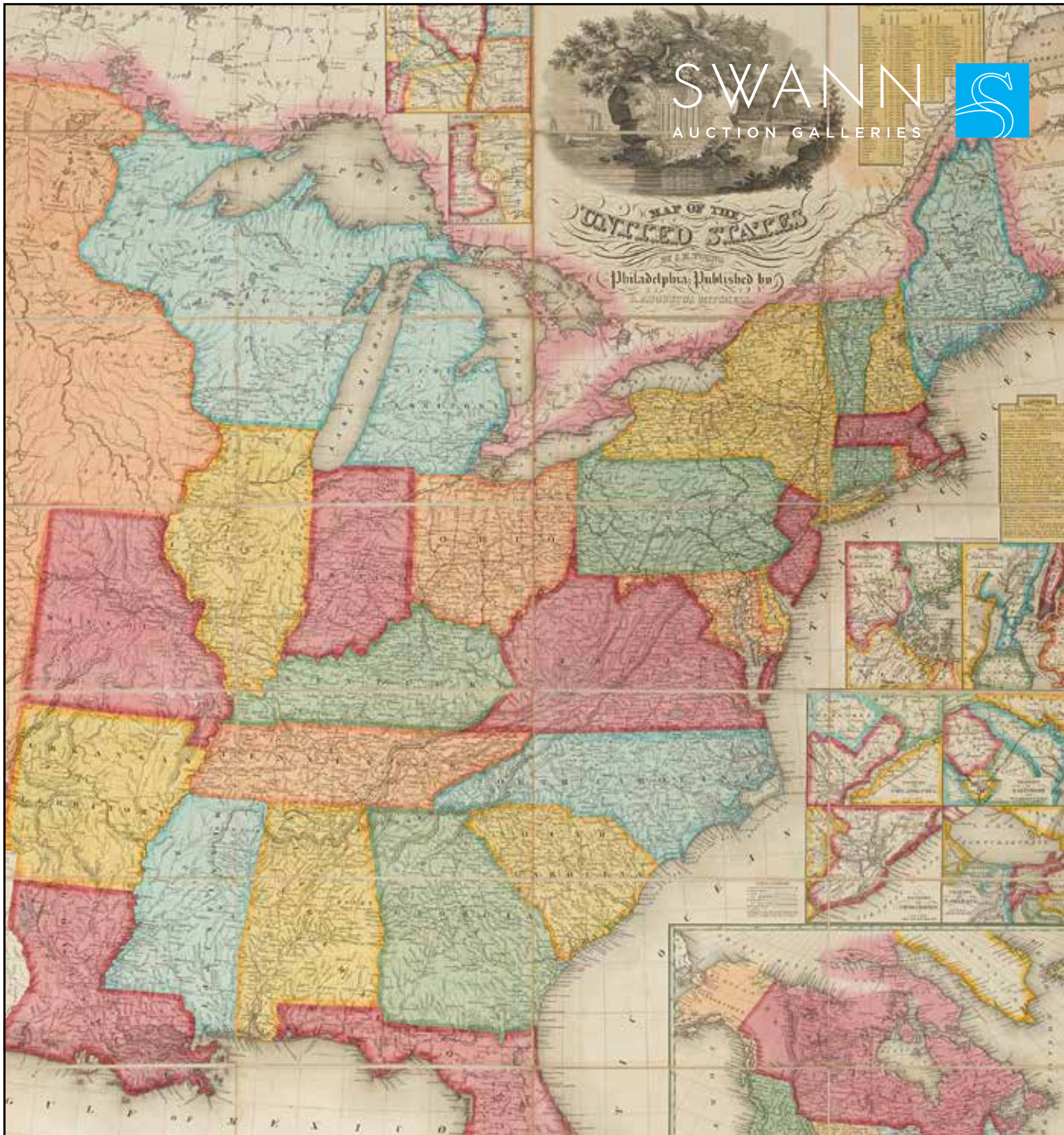


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