

THE EPHEMERA JOURNAL

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MAY 2014

The Origin of the Garden Seed Industry

By M. STEPHEN MILLER

The Shakers, or United Society of Believers, arose as a small Christian sect in mid-19th century England in reaction to the Church of England—the “official” religion of the country. Following years of persecution, eight members, along with their leader Ann Lee, immigrated to New York City in 1774. The American colonies were beginning just then to organize for rebellious separation from the Mother Country. As English subjects, even though wholly apolitical, the Shakers were subject once again to persecution in upstate New York where they had settled.

Over the next thirteen years, the group settled on a tract of former swampland north of Albany, a town then called Niskeyuna, now known as Watervliet. They soon expanded east to the small town of New Lebanon, astride the border with Massachusetts. This became their first fully formed or “gathered” society in 1787. The three founding principles of the sect are referred to today as the “three C’s:” confession of sins, communal ownership of all property, and celibacy. They also believed in gender equality, pacifism, and simplicity in all things. (Although I am using the past tense throughout, the reader is



Figure 1: This seed box was the type used after the Civil War period, designed to sit on a merchant's counter top. The survival of original tin inserts is a rare feature.

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The Ephemera Journal

The
Ephemera
Society
of America

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Deadlines: April 1, August 1,
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Dear Members and Friends:

It is always a pleasure to write this letter, as I know I am reaching members across the world, many of whom may not have the opportunity to actively participate in our events. We reach out to you from the pages of this Journal, and welcome your correspondence. Let us know how you feel your ESA can better meet your needs as a collector, dealer, researcher, or institution. Your ideas are important. In addition to our mid-year meeting, which is always someplace other than Old Greenwich, Connecticut, we are working on ideas to possibly even extend our reach, with a smaller show at another time of year, in another area. We are always trying to find new ways to expand our presence, enrich your membership, and enhance the world of ephemera.

After a grueling winter for most of us, the mild weather draws us out to explore the show circuit, and get back to the thrill and challenge of hunting for ephemera. The first of the season was our magnificent March event – ESA34 – *Food and Drink ~ Field to Table*. A celebratory cocktail party was a warm welcome for a wonderful weekend. The Conference brought together an exceptional array of scholarly presentations, which will be posted online and, gradually, in the Journal. The Chairman, Barbara Loe, is to be commended for a great achievement. Our incomparable Fair, with fine dealers and their exceptional offerings, always draws a very keen audience and, again, the passion was palpable.

The festive Banquet evening began with our annual Auction. Always outstanding, our dynamic auctioneer, George Fox, made it such fun to bid, while generating essential funds for our projects. We are already assembling items for next year, and hope you will consider sending something – it is 100% donation – and we sincerely appreciate gifts of any type, as well as ephemera.

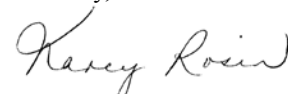
Our Banquet had many special moments, and the prestigious awards will be listed elsewhere in this Journal. It was an exquisite moment for our Rickards Medal recipient, José Rodriguez, and everyone shared his joy. The Reward of Merit is our newest recognition – and is presented to members who have contributed significantly to our progress over the years, but who may not have been Rickards' candidates. We reveled in our ability to begin to catch up with so many people to whom we owe our gratitude. Dick Sheaff, as Chair of the Recognition Committee, designed the certificate, and an enamel lapel pin, which were presented. Dick also designed the delightful conference keepsake program, featuring a collage of trade cards and a jovial chef, and we are grateful to have his creative talents help us to spread our messages so beautifully. It was great pleasure to award the annual Philip Jones Fellowship to a young scholar, carefully selected by Sandi Jones' Committee. All of the evening's recipients superbly reflect the mission of the ESA.

In conjunction with the mid-year Board of Directors' Meeting in Washington, DC, there will be two days of special tours designed exclusively for ESA members, on September 11-12, 2014. These mid-year events are always memorable and being a "Washington Insider" will have new significance, as our visits to special collections will make it a rare experience. For more information, please email us.

ESA35 – our next Conference and Fair – is at its earliest stage – the theme will be *Sport and Play*, although the exact title is not yet set. The subject provides innumerable opportunities for another spectacular event! If you have ideas – please get involved!

It is time to mark your calendars now, for 2015 will be an important year for The Ephemera Society of America – our 35th anniversary. It will also be the 40th anniversary for The Ephemera Society in the United Kingdom. They are designing and hosting a trip for us next May – precise details are not yet available – but it will be a spectacular opportunity to visit England, see our ephemera friends, view many special treasures, visit major book and paper shows, and enjoy numerous unique opportunities. This will be the trip of a lifetime, and you are invited!

Sincerely,



Nancy Rosin, President

Maurice Rickards Award



When I was asked to contribute a few words about José Rodríguez and the collection he placed at the Huntington in 2012, two words came to mind: absolutely and impossible...**absolutely** I would do it, and **impossible** for me to say just a few words because I have come to know and admire him on many levels.

A great many ephemerists know José professionally: as a passionate collector, a devoted dealer and researcher, and a dedicated teacher and promoter of ephemera. He assembled a collection of cameo advertising items that is recognized by printing and postal historians as the foremost archive in the United States. More than 4,000 business cards, envelopes, billheads, letterheads, and collateral items document and illustrate the history of embossed die stamp printing in America from 1849 to 1920, with major emphasis on the most prolific period of production, 1850 to 1880.

But I also have the great pleasure of getting to know José personally, and the more I learn about him, the more I discover character similarities between his work life and his home life. Just as he is a passionate collector, he is a super-passionate family man; just as he is a devoted dealer, he is a hyper-devoted husband, father, and grandfather; and just as he is a dedicated promoter of ephemera, he is an extra-dedicated promoter of his community.

I first met José in 1992, my rookie season attending the annual Ephemera Society event. I walked into his booth and, because his reputation preceded him, we skipped the usual conversation icebreakers. For the next hour and a half I received my first real education on the history of cameo engraved advertising in America. How incredible! José taught me about printers from New York and Pennsylvania, gave me a lesson devoted to cameos from the state of Delaware (who knew?), and followed that with a special introduction to Tom Beckman, his long-time friend and research confidant who sadly passed away at too young an age, but who left his cameo collection to José in his will, a true testament to their brotherhood.

I imagine José doesn't recall this meeting... and for good reason: I'm easily forgettable, and he probably has conducted many crash courses just like this one. But it marks the seminal moment in realizing that José is the kind of collector who becomes a life-long scholar of his passions. He has amazing instincts for finding and identifying cameo ephemera that will prove to be of significant value to students and scholars. The Huntington is grateful to him for having the foresight to collect this material, the commitment to keep it together as a body of work, and the desire to place it in our care so that we can proudly continue his legacy.

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In this Issue...

The voluptuous Sophia Loren supposedly quipped “everything you see I owe to spaghetti.” This remark, although apocryphal, serves as an epigrammatic reminder that the food we plant, harvest, package, prepare, and eat is a reflection of ourselves, and of our culture. The distinguished Ephemera/34 speakers, showcased in this issue and undoubtedly versed in the “Loren Theorem,” demonstrated how the often visually stunning ephemera of food and drink similarly both mirrors and influences culture. Our lead article by **M. Stephen Miller** shows how something as simple and “unsavable” as a seed packet reveals how a Shaker society was able to support an entire community through advertising and marketing garden seeds. Continuing the theme of plant rudiments, the Conference keynote speaker, **Dr. William Woys Weaver**, reminisced that, as a boy, he nurtured back to life seeds found in baby food jars in his deceased grandfather's freezer. These became the basis for the Roughwood Seed Collection of over 4,000 heirloom plants. A review of his award-winning *Culinary Ephemera: An Illustrated History* appears in this issue. Andy Warhol's famous Campbell's (Tomato) Soup Can depicted a ubiquitous staple food found in millions of American homes and turned it into high art. **Michael Russo**, a visual artist and master gardener, chose humorous and evocative images, using the same vegetable (technically a fruit) selected by Warhol, for a tomato alphabet, selections from which appear here. We also offer in this issue a small portion of the enormous collection of **Henry Voigt** whose conviction is that “Menus aid our cultural memory—they provide unwitting historical evidence—not only of what people were eating, but what they were doing and with whom they were doing it, who they were trying to be and what they valued.” A review of *Dear Nannie ... yours devotedly, Charlie* co-authored by **Gail McMillan** shows us how integral food and drink are to daily life, the social history of a family over generations, the influences of the changing times, and how history is reflected in the ephemera of everyday life. Culinary ephemera encompasses a vast array of topics, from agricultural implements, to beverages, such as coffee, tea, and beer, each of which could be the subject of an entire conference. Our appetite is whetted! (Thanks to Bruce Shyer for excerpts from his Conference program essay.) This issue's ‘research in progress’ contribution, on the Saltire Society Chapbooks, is by **Kristin Bluemel** of Monmouth University, NJ.

—Diane DeBlois, editor

Like Henry Huntington, who amassed a “collection of collections” by acquiring individual books and entire libraries, the prints & ephemera archives at the Huntington Library is also a collection of collections. José’s collection, for example, joins three other collections assembled by Maurice Rickards Award winners: The Jay T. Last Collection of Lithography and Social History, The Jonathan D. Bulkley Collection of Illustrated Billheads and Letterheads, and The William H. Helfand Collection of Medical Prints and Ephemera. In addition, within the Last Collection is an amazing group of prints and posters collected by two other Rickards Award winners: Robert Staples and Barbara Charles.

Just as José’s collection joins a family of extraordinary collections, now he joins a family of distinguished ephemerists - well deserving of the Ephemera Society’s highest honor.

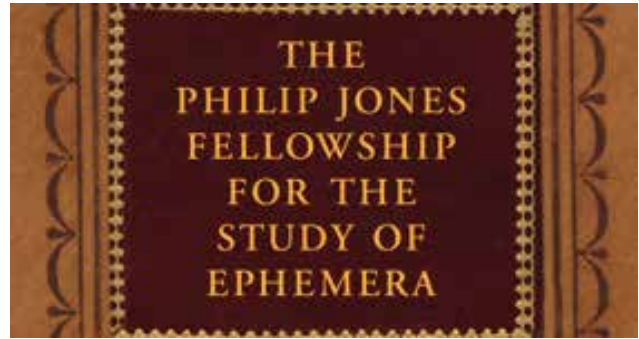
Extracted from David Mihaly’s remarks at the award presentation

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.



Talia Coutin, a graduate student in the Winterthur Program in American Material Culture is the winner of the 2014 Philip Jones Fellowship in Ephemera Studies. She will be completing her Masters thesis on interpreting the bicycle advertisements designed by Will H. Bradley in the last decade of the 19th century. Fellowship criteria may be found on the Society web site, but, in general, the funded study should advance one or more aims of the Society:

- To cultivate and encourage interest in ephemera and the history identified with it
- To further the understanding, appreciation, and enjoyment of ephemera by people of all ages, backgrounds, and levels of interest
- To promote the personal and institutional collection, preservation, exhibition, and research of ephemeral materials
- To serve as a link among collectors, dealers, institutions, and scholars
- To contribute to the cultural life of those who have an interest in our heritage as a nation or a people, both nationally and internationally.

Proposals should reach the Society by December 1, 2014.

Call for Nominations for the Maurice Rickards Award:

Members wishing to suggest a candidate should send the name of that person, together with a detailed written statement setting forth the qualifications of that person, based upon the following standards: The Maurice Rickards Award is presented to a person or persons who have made important contributions to the field of ephemera. He or she does not have to be an American or even a member of The Ephemera Society of America; however, recipients must be seriously involved in the discipline of ephemera as a collector, dealer, researcher, institutional curator, or conservator. Accomplishments in the field include scholarly publications, the preparation of exhibitions and catalogs, the development of new or improved methods of conservation, placement of ephemera collections in public institutions, and the promotion of ephemera as one way of understanding our country’s history.

Submissions must be received by the Awards Committee, info@ephemerasociety.org, or PO Box 95, Cazenovia NY 13025 by July 1, 2014. The Committee will evaluate member recommendations, as well as those from any other sources, and make its recommendation for consideration by the Society’s Board of Directors, at the Board’s mid-year meeting in September 2014.

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reminded that there are still several Shakers, or Believers, living in one remaining community, at Sabbathday Lake in Maine.)

Almost immediately there was an influx of scores of new members into the New Lebanon, NY community, often of whole families who were disaffected with the dominant Congregational Church and were part of a strong Baptist “stir.” Just as quickly the Shaker leaders realized the necessity for developing an economic base in order to purchase from “the World” goods and supplies that they could not produce themselves. These included metals (tin, copper, and iron), foodstuffs (salt, sugar, coffee, tea) and building materials (glass, lead, cement, and nails).

Each community was, in essence, a very large communal farm—New Lebanon’s land holdings, for example, covered nearly six thousand acres, more than nine square miles—and it was only logical that the economy that developed would be soil-based. Although New Lebanon’s livestock provided the raw materials for a large saddle- and harness-making business, and their craftsmen fashioned a variety of woodenwares for sale in their workshops, the raising and selling of garden seeds became the foundational industry for this and every other Shaker community.

In 1790, only three years after its founding, there were

The Archive Connection

“The Miller Collection of Shaker Ephemera” is pledged to the Communal Societies Collection at Hamilton College, Clinton, NY. The transfer of the 14,000+ pieces, the most comprehensive collection of Shaker ephemera extant, will take place over a period of ten years. It began in 2011 and will be completed in 2020.

All of the “flat” paper is in the process of being put into digital format and will be available soon on line through the Digital Collections of Burke Library, Hamilton College. The pamphlets will be listed in former Hamilton College Couper Librarian Randy Ericson’s new bibliography of publications by and about the Shakers that will be published in about three years.

221 members at New Lebanon and the first sales of excess vegetable garden seeds to neighbors were recorded. Ledgers from this time show that these sales were to nearby farmers and were in bulk. Six years earlier, David Landreth and Son in Philadelphia had established a **wholesale** business selling garden seeds in bulk, also to farmers. The Shakers reasoned that non-farmers might also like to be able to raise small “kitchen gardens” to feed themselves. This would mean that they would need access to smaller quantities of seed. It was this intuition

on the part of the Shakers that sparked the development of a **retail** business to supply them. For nearly seventy-five years, this business was the main economic engine that propelled and sustained the community.

By 1793 there were ten more communities spread through New

England and New York State. Each soon developed a garden seed industry and, in the fog of history, it is not known now which was “first among equals” as several laid claim to this. New Lebanon, however, was the

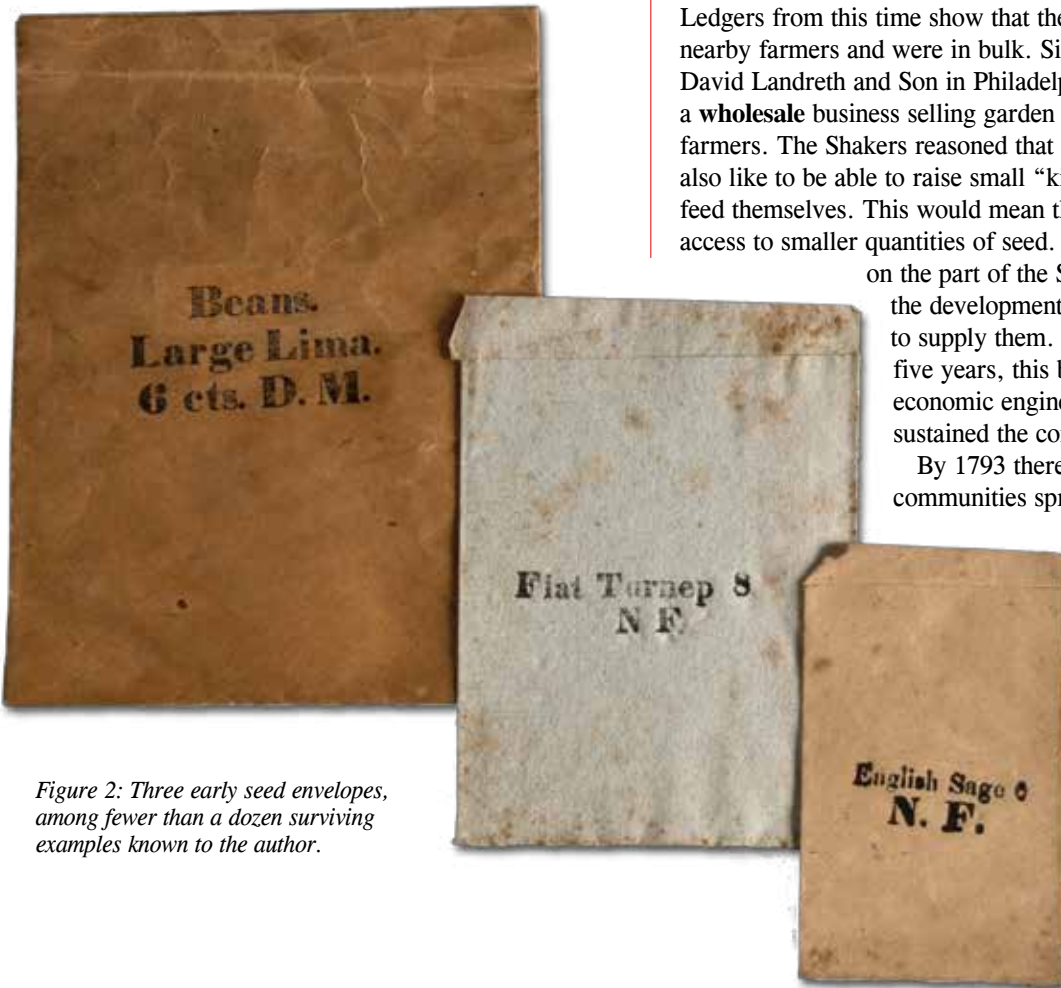


Figure 2: Three early seed envelopes, among fewer than a dozen surviving examples known to the author.



Figure 3: Two seed boxes from around 1820-1850. Courtesy of the Shaker Museum, New Lebanon, NY.

largest and served as the “center of union,” the Mother Church for the movement, and this is the community on which this essay will focus. Equally important for our purposes, more manuscript material—journals, ledgers, account books, and the like—as well as more ephemera has survived from this one Shaker village than from all the others combined!

In either 1794 or 1795 the New Lebanon Shakers began to organize the business, setting aside the first of hundreds of dedicated acres and initiating a series of improvements over family farms that allowed the nascent

enterprise to blossom into their major source of revenues. Records show that in the latter year they sold several types of seeds, but onion seed—201 pounds—dominated. By the beginning of the 19th century they were measuring seed production in terms of *tonnage*. In 1805, for instance, they recorded a yield of seven tons of vegetable seeds and received \$1,240.00 in receipts (or approximately \$31,512.00 in today’s dollars, using the Consumer Price Index conversion factor).

It should be noted here that there was nothing about making a profit that ran counter to their core beliefs, so long as that profit was come by honestly. They guaranteed that their seeds were of the highest quality and they never held over for sale seed from one growing season to the next.

When they did sell in bulk form, mainly in the latter part of the 19th century, buyers could count on the same high quality along with fair weight. While the vast majority of their sales were for vegetable seeds, they also raised and sold herb, grass, and flower seeds.

Coming back to the year 1805, there were now just over 300 members, most of whom had been small farmers prior to converting. With a large, experienced, and highly motivated work force—fully believing that they were laboring to build a heaven here on earth—and a buying public eager for the product of the Believer’s efforts, one could say the fields were fertile for innovation. And innovate they did.

Looking at the earliest seed envelopes, whose dates cannot be firmly fixed but were probably used ca1810-1830—the first printing press arrived at the community in 1808—one notices the bold letters D.M. or N.F. printed



Figure 4: A stack of rectangular printed papers were trimmed with off-set chisels to form flaps that were later folded and pasted.



on them (see Figure 2). This is a very early example of what today is called “branding.” It was both a way of identifying the Shakers as the source and of using the initials of either the first trustee or business manager for the society, David Meacham, or the specific family as a guarantee of quality. (Families in Shaker villages were

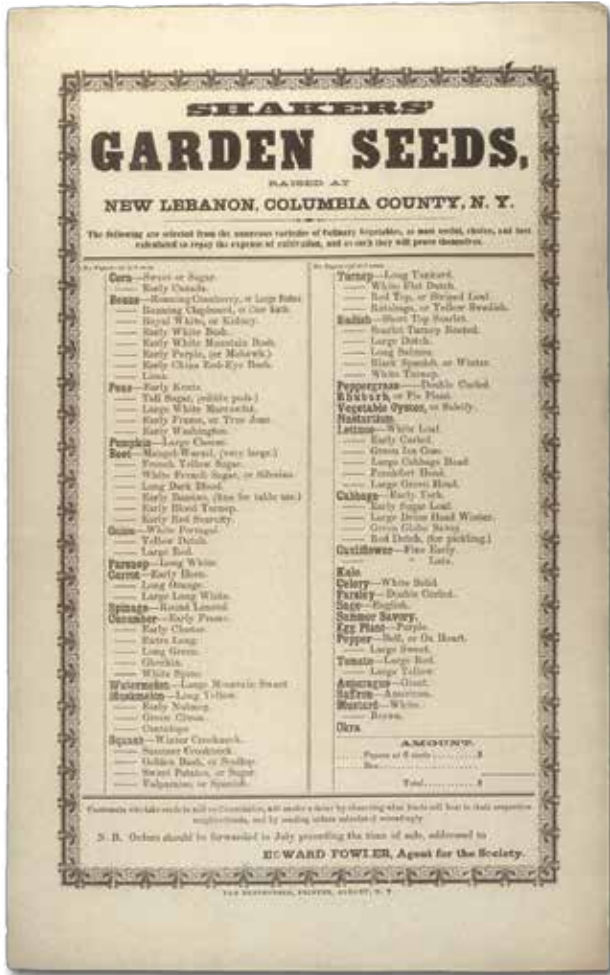


Figure 5: An early seed list from the mid-1840s, printed for the Shakers in Albany, NY.

political rather than biological units; N.F. was the North Family, S.F. the Second Family.) Brother Meacham actually died in 1826; yet, as we shall see, his initials were still being used on seed envelopes sold by the New Lebanon Shakers as late as 1888.

By 1810 the seed business was a fully integrated industry with four precisely coordinated “divisions”: the fields, the barns, the shops, and the “World.” Each of these divisions required a series of innovations, for the industry began *de novo*. There was simply no model to which the Shakers could turn. They *created* the model from the ground up. Both brethren and sisters took part in the seed industry although their roles were different and strictly separated.

In the fields—the soil was cultivated, fertilized, planted, weeded/thinned, and harvested. Only males were active here. In fact the Shaker’s own school system was set up in such a way, that the boys would be available for work in the fields from planting time through harvest time.

In the barns—seeds were sorted, cleaned, and dried. Careful drying was a critical step; any mildew would keep seeds from germinating. Certain plants like beets, onions, and cabbages are biennials and must be “wintered-over” in barns in order to be replanted so they can set seeds the following year.

In the shops—all manner of paper ephemera were printed: seed envelopes, box labels, catalogs, invoices, billheads, and receipts. All of this work was carried out by sisters. Seed envelopes, called “papers” by the Shakers, were printed by the Sisters, trimmed, folded, pasted, and then filled (see Figure 4). In the wood mill brothers fabricated simple pine boxes to hold the envelopes. At first these had simple nailed corners. Later, machine-cut dovetails were used to make them more durable. Sometimes a coat of protective paint was applied to their exteriors.

Outside of the community—in late winter Brethren delivered the filled boxes to country stores scattered throughout the countryside and retrieved them in late summer. This was accomplished at first by horse and wagon—or in winter, sled—and later by railroad. Here too business arrangements were negotiated and monies collected. Merchants typically received a 25% to 33% commission on each package sold. Since each box had an inventory list pasted under the lid it was easy to calculate the commission. (These labels were commercially printed color lithographs after about 1870 and doubled as lush advertising when the opened box sat on a merchant’s counter top – see figure 1.)

In 1811, not too many miles downriver from the Shaker community in Enfield, Connecticut, a seed house in Wethersfield, Connecticut that was later known as Comstock, Ferre & Co., became the first purveyor of



Figure 6: Three receipts from the 1860s, 1870s, 1880s.



Figure 7: A tomato label printed in the next to last Illustrated Catalog, 1886.

demands of a market but also in *creating* one. An example of this was their advocacy of tomatoes. These fruits were an uncommon part of the North American diet. Although they originated in various forms in South America and had traveled to Europe, superstitions abounded as to their potential toxic effects as members of the nightshade family. These myths followed the tomato back to the United States with immigrant families. The Shakers *liked* this fruit very much as a food source that was tasty, useful in many forms, as well as cheap and easy to produce. They first put tomato seeds up for sale in 1828 and in their earliest bound catalog, printed seven years later, described the fruit as a “harmless, very delicious, wholesome and cheap vegetable...there are but few who relish the tomato at the first taste; and few who are not extremely fond of it when properly cooked and they become accustomed to

retail seeds outside of a Shaker community. It remains active to this day.

The entrepreneurial genius of the Shakers resided not only in their talent for recognizing and meeting the

it.” Note: even then the community cautiously and wisely did not advocating eating the fruit in its “raw” state.

The 1830s were the period of greatest florescence for the garden seed industry at New Lebanon. The



Figure 8: A group of seed envelopes from the 1840s or 1850s.

seed envelopes printed then were far more sophisticated and usually included planting instructions. In 1835 they printed 150,000 envelopes. That year they also published their first *Gardener's Manual*. This was a twenty-four page pamphlet that opened with "A few General Remarks on the Management of a Kitchen Garden" and was followed by detailed descriptions of twenty-seven vegetables, from asparagus to turnep [sic]. Sixteen thousand copies were printed and they sold for six cents each. The net profit from the business that year was just under \$59,000 in 2014 dollars. Charles F. Crosman, head gardener for the community, wrote the pamphlet. In addition to his duties at home, he was responsible for delivering and retrieving seed boxes along their most prosperous route, following the Erie Canal west all the way to Buffalo.

Several years later the leaders of the community noticed that Brother Crosman was spending more and more time on these selling trips. In 1839 the reason for this became known; Charles Crosman had been lingering at a site along the Genesee River in Rochester, NY. Later that year he left the community and the following spring Crosman Seed Company was in business. Charles married and had two sons. After he died in 1866 the company became Crosman Brothers Seed Co. It remains in business today.

The loss was a psychological blow to the Shakers but with characteristic determination they soldiered on. Between 1836 and 1840 just under a million seed envelopes were printed. Eighty-nine types of seed were now offered. In the following seven years the pace continued almost unabated with their total stock of seed material—loose, bagged, and boxed—valued at \$79, 879,



Figure 9: Seed catalogs from 1835, 1843 and 1877.



Figure 10: The only known example of an early seed broadside.

in 1847 dollars.

Another type of advertising used was in the form of large broadsides. The earlier ones were printed with black text on white backgrounds; these were followed by multi-colored, letterpress printed examples. Although there is no record of how they were intended to be used, it seems clear that they were meant to hang in the windows, or on the walls of country stores. The Shakers also placed small ads in local newspapers. Numerous examples of these survive.

The years 1850-1870 were the hay day of the seed industry at New Lebanon. Although they were slightly hurt by the embargo against shipping seed to the South, this was offset by continued expansion westward. Catalogs were issued every year (until 1888). Each bound volume contained from 84-98 pages with extended descriptions, planting advice, and a profusion

of woodcuts. Box labels and seed envelopes became much more colorful, depending as they did upon commercial chromolithographic firms in "the World."

Nonetheless, the signs of trouble for the industry continued. The number of able-bodied brethren continued to steadily decline. In 1850 there were 216 males including the young and the very old. In 1870 that number had been reduced to 140, many of whom were too infirm to be productive. Cheap and abundant immigrant labor available to the multitude of seed companies that sprang up after the Civil War made it



Figure 11: Three of the final style of seed envelopes, ca1888.

difficult for the Shakers to compete. At the end of 1884 the community reorganized its business as the Shaker Seed Company, combining the previously separate family businesses—East, North, Second, and Church—as one.

Several other measures were taken to help prop up the enterprise. Colorful printed premiums, “free chromos,” were offered. A fourteen-page wholesale catalog was made

up that listed seeds by the pound, with “special prices quoted on hundred lb. lots whenever desired.” This then was a mail order business with all shipments by rail.

All of this was ultimately to no avail. One fateful evening in 1887 the leaders met to decide the fate of this industry. Elder Giles Avery wrote: “*This evening we have a meeting...to consider the subject of continuing, or discontinuing the seed business. It is decided to throw it up as soon as practicable to do so.*” It actually took another one to two years to sell off all the inventory. By 1890, almost one hundred years after this important and long-standing industry was launched, the end had come.

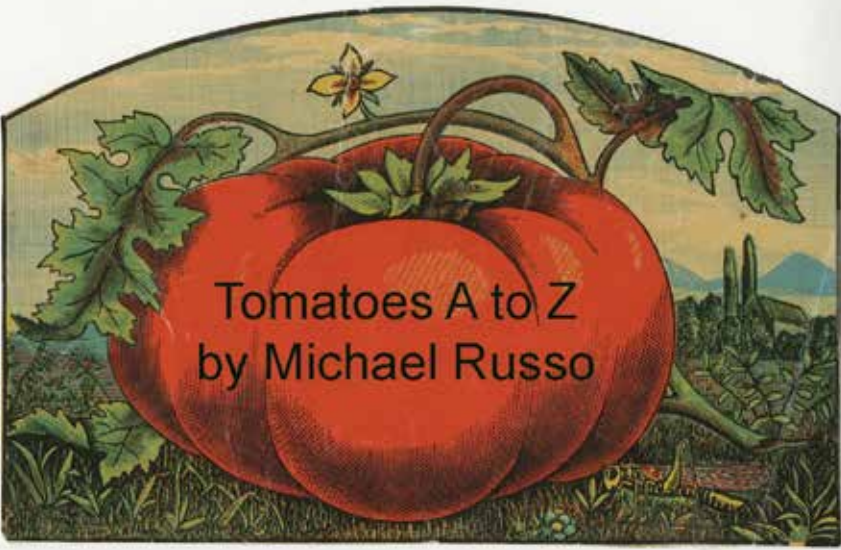
The above shows in concrete terms both *why* the Shakers created this historically important garden seed industry and *how* they developed it through a series of inspired innovations. The ultimate fruits of their labors surround us today; not in seed packages that bear *their* name any longer but on those of scores of companies that followed their footsteps.



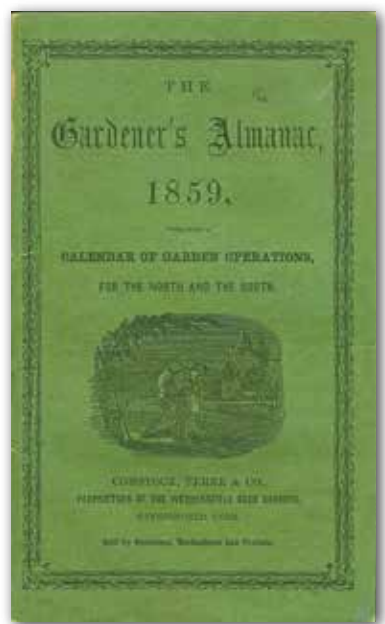
Figure 12: A late seed catalog.

M. Stephen Miller has been a member of the Ephemera Society since the second year of it's founding. He served for three years as a board member, two as Chairman of the Board. He has collected, researched, displayed, written about, and lectured on Shaker ephemera since 1978. The Miller Collection has been the basis for a number of publications: most recently, *From Shaker Lands and Shaker Hands* (2007) and *Inspired Innovations: A Celebration of Shaker Ingenuity* (2010)—both published by University Press of New England.





Tomatoes A to Z
by Michael Russo



A is for Almanacs
(*The Gardener's Almanac 1859*)



B is for Botanical Illustration
(18th century Love Apples)



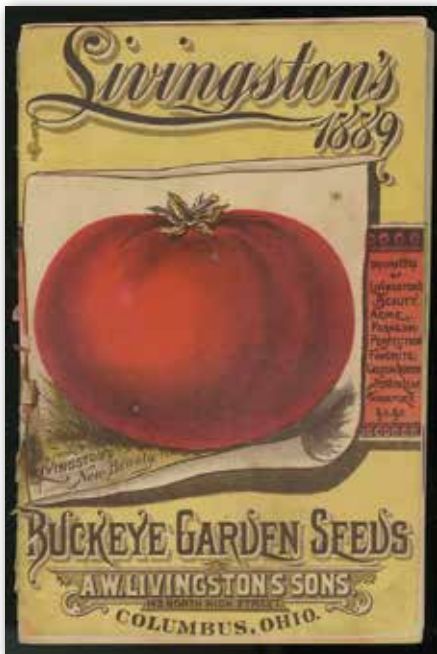
C is for Catalogs



D is for Diadem
(introduced in 1897)



E is for Early (Ely's 1889 "King of Earlies Tomato")



F is for Father (A.W. Livingston, the 'father' of the round tomato)



G is for Giant



H is for Heaviest



L is for Labels



M is for Matchbooks



N is for NASA



I is for Instruction



J is for Juice



K is for Ketchup (or 'catsup')



O is for Oxheart



P is for Packets



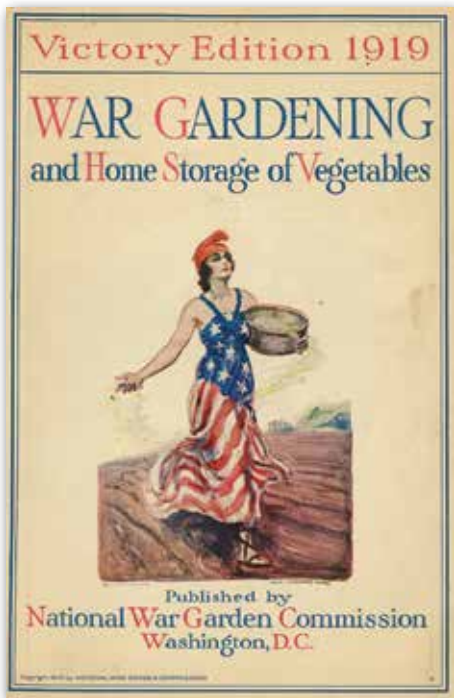
Q is for Queen



R is for Recipes



S is for Salad



V is for Victory Garden

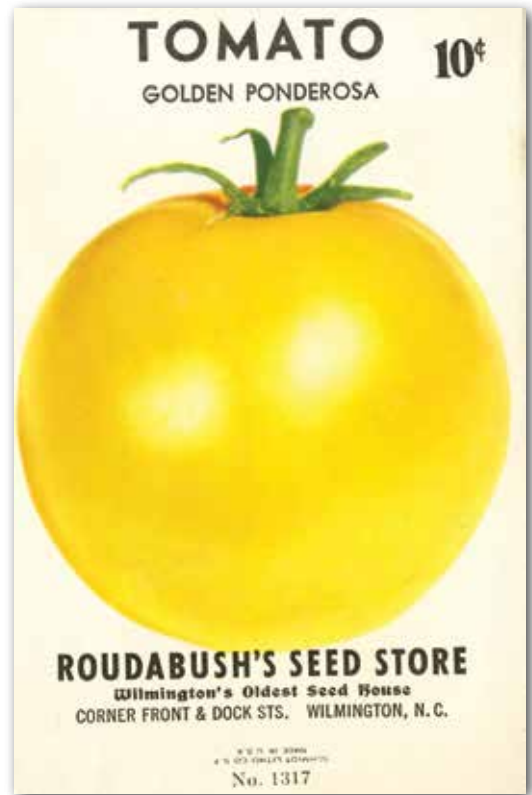


W is for World's Fair (Heinz pavilion at the 1939 New York fair)



U is for Undressed

T is for Tradecard



Y is for Yellow



X is for Exaggeration



Z is for Zebra

Michael Russo. Ephemera collecting played an important role in Michael Russo's family holiday traditions. Michael, a visual artist, retired art educator, master gardener, floral designer, organic "gentleman farmer" and Vice President of the National Valentine Collectors Association is an avid supporter of the "Farm to Table" and "Slow Flowers" movements. He is owner of Trout Lily Farm, recently featured in Organic Gardening Magazine. His ephemera collections have been featured in Martha Stewart Living Wedding magazine and he has appeared with Stewart in a television segment on the Victorian Language of Flowers.



What's on the Menu?

BY HENRY VOIGHT

The menu did not exist until the late 1830s. It came into being along with the earliest hotels and restaurants, at a time when *service à la russe*—the serving of dishes in courses rather than all at once—was growing in popularity. For the first time, diners were granted choice and anticipation.

Menus aid our cultural memory. They provide unwitting historical evidence—not only of what people were eating, but what they were doing and with whom they were doing it; who they were trying to be; and what they valued. Deciphering the particular story behind each menu requires great sleuth-work.



Figure 1



Figure 2

Boston 1842

Few menus from the early 1840s have survived. Dating to a time when people seldom ate outside the home, they were rarely seen even then. Hotels and restaurants were in their infancy, slowly emerging as an expression of American ideals of mobility, democracy, and civil society. This is evidenced by two menus from Boston in the summer of 1842,¹ showing a certain degree of uniformity in the foods consumed by the middle- and working-classes of the Jacksonian Era.

Situated in a low, dark room on Court Square, near the Old State Building, Parker's Restorant (*sic*) was

frequented by businessmen, lawyers, and newspapermen. The daily menu shown as figure 1 displays an early spelling of the French word “restaurant” which was still a relatively new term. The prices are shown in 12 1/2-cent increments, reflecting the widespread use of the Spanish real. Although the discovery of gold in California was only six years away, the practice of using the specie of other countries would continue until 1857, when the mines in the West were producing enough precious metals for the United States to mint all its own coins. By then, restaurateur Harvey Parker had established the Parker House, a first-class hotel on School Street, near the venerable Tremont House.

The menu, figure 2, comes from an Independence Day banquet at Porter’s Cambridge Market Hotel, located in an area now known as Porter Square. The Fourth of July was the biggest holiday of the year, celebrated with speeches, parades, fireworks and festive banquets, such as this one held by the “truckmen.” Once ubiquitous on the bustling streets of American cities, truckmen used handcarts to move goods to the warehouses and markets. Describing the colorful language of these workers in his diary in 1840, essayist Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote, “I confess to some pleasure from the stinging rhetoric of a rattling oath in the mouth of truckmen & teamsters. How laconic and brisk it is by the side of a page of the North American Review. Cut these words & they would bleed; they are vascular & alive; they walk & run. Moreover they who speak them have this elegancy, that they do not trip in their speech. It is a shower of bullets...”

The food at the proletarian banquet in Cambridge sounds very similar to the daily fare at the bourgeois restaurant in Boston. The dishes on both menus are described in basic terms like “beef,” “pig,” and “mutton.” Neither menu employs culinary French to describe how the dishes were prepared. The underlying message is one of abundance, not cuisine. However, by late 1840s, the famines and failed revolutions in Europe

sparked the first wave of mass immigration into the United States, causing the nation’s cultural and social practices to become more diversified, including the consumption of food.

Mississippi Steamboat 1857

Said to be the fastest paddle steamer on the Mississippi, the *Princess* was also one of the most elegant, as depicted in the figure 3 painting of its interior by French-born Louisiana artist Marie Adrien Persac. For the first-class passengers, the great central hall was transformed into a dining room four times a day—breakfast at 7:30, dinner at 2:00, tea at 7:00, and a cold supper from 9:00 to midnight.² The meals were prepared and served by members of the cabin crew, comprising mostly free blacks and slaves. Since the *Princess* operated in the Deep South during the late antebellum period, it seems likely that the majority of its cabin and deck crews were slaves who had been leased from the riverside plantations. At the time, slightly more than half of the people living in Louisiana and Mississippi were slaves.³ In the background of this painting, several African American waiters can be seen standing at attention behind the chairs in the dining room. Waiters ranked high in the hierarchy of riverboat workers, as did barbers. However, more slaves than free blacks labored on the lower deck as firemen and roustabouts who loaded and unloaded the cargo. About two percent of the riverboat labor force were enslaved women who worked as chambermaids.

The U.S. Mail Packet *Princess*, and its sister boat *Natchez*, each made the roundtrip from New Orleans to Vicksburg once a week, promptly departing at 5:00 in the afternoon on Tuesdays and Saturdays, respectively.⁴

The menu in figure 4 is dated April 19, 1857, about four years before Confederate forces opened fire on Fort Sumter. The headings and delicate border on this menu were printed by Henry Spencer’s Magic Press that maintained an office on Poydras Street, immediately adjacent to the docks in New Orleans. However, it appears that the names of the dishes were added later, possibly printed on board the riverboat just prior to the meal. Based on the regular schedule, this Sunday dinner was served a few hours after departing Baton Rouge, as the steamer headed south on the last leg of its weekly run. Since high-class steamboats like the *Princess* tried to attract customers with the quality of its food, the crew may have procured fresh provisions in Baton Rouge that morning. Although regional influences are generally muted on menus from the era, this bill of fare features local seafood dishes like baked redfish, broiled pompino (*sic*), and stuffed crab.

On the surface, this menu appears similar to other American menus of the period, but there are some differences. For one thing, there is no French, despite the fact that the region was colonized by France; there was even a small



Figure 3

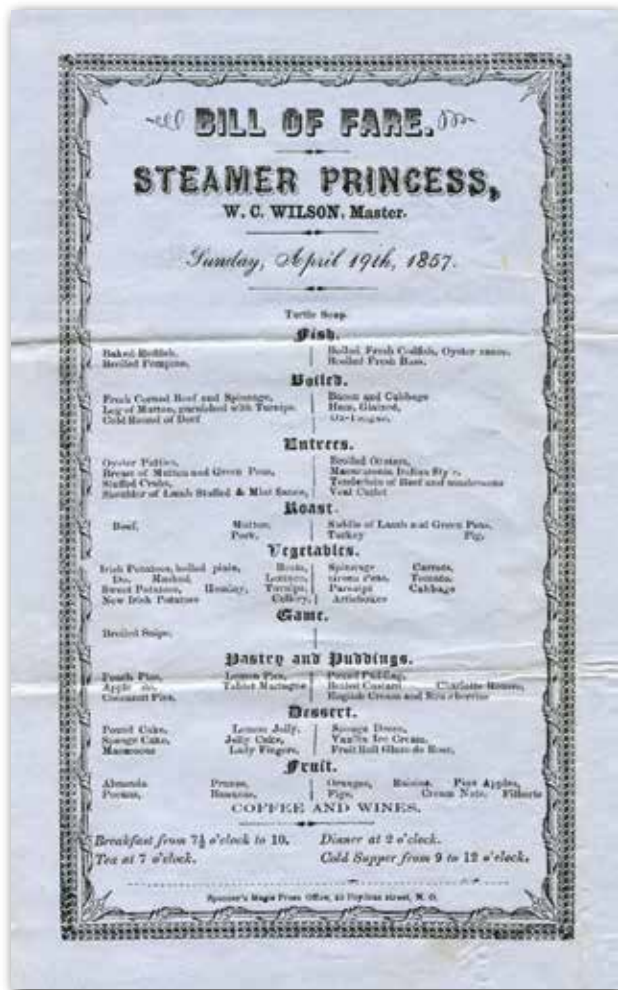


Figure 4

group of wealthy, slave-owning planters known as the “genteel Arcadians.” At the time, it was somewhat unusual not to use at least some French on upper-class menus in the United States. In addition, some of the words are spelled in particularly unusual ways, such as the word “spinnage” which is used twice. Interestingly, the word “spinage” appears on extant menus from two hotels in New Orleans in 1857, seemingly linking the riverboat steward to the dining rooms of that city.⁵

The entrée named macaronia (*sic*) Italian style may have been the result of a printing error. However, the presence of this low-cost dish, ubiquitous on menus in the 19th-century, reflects the fact that operating a steamboat was a competitive business. The profit motive also determined what foods were given to the slaves. In addition to planting their own gardens, slaves often received one ration of vegetables each day as a way to reduce their meat consumption. Culinary historian Sam Hilliard argues that the planter elite consumed much of the same foods as their slaves, only in greater quantities and with more variety.⁶ There are a lot of vegetables on this menu relative to comparable menus in the North.⁷ Although climate and season played a role, these vegetables may also suggest that the foods routinely eaten

by slaves ultimately influenced the diet of the white upper classes in the antebellum South. Dairy products, which were relatively scarce in some parts of the region, may have represented the biggest difference in their respective diets. Although eyewitness accounts vary, whites used most of the milk when in short supply, occasionally giving any surplus to enslaved children. Other dairy products, such as the vanilla ice cream on this menu, were probably never made available to slaves.

1852 Thanksgiving at Sea & on Shore

Two menus from Thanksgiving in 1852 stir the imagination. One is a rare survivor from a ship on the high seas. Proclaiming the special day in large script, it stands in marked contrast to a menu from a hotel in Connecticut, where curiously, the reference to Thanksgiving is much less obvious.

The menu shown in figure 5 from the Tontine Hotel in New Haven features an attractive woodblock print of the building, obscured by a canopy of mature elm trees that gave the town its nickname “Elm City.” Situated on the southeast end of the picturesque Green, opposite Yale’s Old Brick Row, the Tontine was a transient hotel, as well as a hub of the town’s financial, political, and social activities.⁸ Although there are no prices for the food on this table d’hôte menu, the relative affluence of its clientele is indicated by the fifty-cent corkage fee on wine not furnished by the house, representing about \$14 today. In fact, this bill of fare is probably much the same as their regular daily menu, where the everyday dishes looked more appealing than their names implied. For example, according to an early recipe, the entrée of eels was probably prepared by mixing small strips of well-broiled eel with bits of salt pork in a casserole, before being covered with a layer of pounded rusk bread and baked.⁹ Offering a more festive appearance, the chartreuse of vegetables comprised a mixture of multi-colored vegetables, symmetrically and tastefully arranged in a flat mold, garnished with special meats, or game like quails, pigeons, or larks. The chartreuse was baked and unmolded upside down, providing an attractive display for the table.¹⁰

Since turkey was ubiquitous on American menus in the 19th century, this bill of fare appears to have only one overt reference to the holiday. Although you might not notice it at first glance, there are two kinds of apple custard pie. The one called Marlborough pie was a customary Thanksgiving dessert in New England. According to an 1841 cookbook titled *The American Housewife*, it was made by first paring and grating “sweet mellow apples,” perhaps referring to the crimson-striped Baldwins that were then popular. “To a pint of the grated pulp put a pint of milk, a couple of eggs, two table-spoonfuls of melted butter, the grated peel of a lemon, and half a wine glass of brandy. Sweeten it to the taste with nice brown sugar. The eggs should be beaten to a froth, then the sugar stirred into them, and mixed with the rest of the ingredients. A little stewed pumpkin, mixed

with the apples, improves the pie. Bake the pie in deep plates, without an upper crust.”

Oddly enough, all of the pies were probably made at a pie factory located three blocks away. Established in 1844 by a blacksmith named Amos Munson, this large bakery produced “toothsome, old-fashioned pies,” each with a hand-rolled crust, for sale in New York City.¹¹ By spring 1849, Munson was shipping over a thousand pies a day to the metropolis by steamboat. The good-natured entrepreneur also sold his pies to the local eateries in New Haven, although the numbers were miniscule by comparison, since the town only had about twenty thousand residents. It is entirely possible that the Marlborough pie served at the Tontine was made as part of a large production run, reflecting urban nostalgia for the traditional tastes of Thanksgiving in small-town New England.

It was a wet and rainy day in Liverpool on November 17, 1852, when the *S. S. Baltic* departed at noon for New York. There were sixty-eight passengers on board, well below the ship’s 280-person capacity, which was not unusual for an off-season crossing. The *Baltic* was a new 282-foot, side-wheel steamer of the New York & Liverpool United States’ Mail Steamship Company. Popularly known as the Collins Line, the firm operated a fleet of packets offering regularly scheduled passenger service between the two cities. The richly-appointed passenger berths were arranged around two large central rooms—a dining room and a grand salon. These expensively-furnished rooms were illuminated by large ventilated columns of patterned glass stretching to the skylight. Unlike its British rival, the parsimonious Cunard Line, the American-owned Collins Line was all about luxury and speed, burning coal at highly-inefficient rates just to shave a few hours off the trip. Powered by two 500-horsepower engines, the wooden-hulled *Baltic* cruised at 12 to 13 knots, completing the transatlantic crossing in less than ten days when the weather was favorable.¹² And if that were not enough, the Collins Line employed French chefs.

Thanksgiving arrived on their eighth day at sea. Although a severe gale was behind them, they continued to battle strong westerly winds. Despite the choppy conditions, most passengers would have overcome the seasickness that typically plagued everyone during the first few days. Nevertheless, even those who were still feeling queasy would attend this dinner, because social etiquette on board a ship required it—one should *always* go to the table; that is, if one possibly could.

At eight bells (noon), the passengers began to make their way to the dining room through a long, narrow passageway, putting their hands up to one side, and then the other, to support themselves as the ship pitched and rolled. At one point, they came to the place where they had to go up five or six steps, and then down again, passing over the main shaft that connected the engine to the paddle wheel. Soon, they entered the large room, where several long tables were spread, each encircled

with a ledge to keep the dishes from sliding off. In addition to the side ledges, partitioned-off spaces in the middle kept the dishes, utensils, and glasses in place, even though there would be a lot of sliding and jingling whenever a large wave came along.¹³ Above each table, suspended from the ceiling, there was a long, finely-crafted shelf with a variety of racks and sockets that securely held the wineglasses, tumblers, and decanters. As the passengers staggered to their places and sat down on the cushioned settees, the waiters were already positioned in various parts of the room. The dinner service proceeded very much like that in a fine hotel, except that everything was in constant motion.

One of the special foods on this westbound crossing was wild hare.¹⁴ Unlike rabbit, which has tender white meat, hare belongs to a different genus and has dark muscular meat. (These fast-moving leporids were called “jackrabbits” on menus in the Midwest.) On this voyage, the chef seems to have had a drove of hares at his disposal, since they were used in a soup, a cold pie, and as a game dish pared with plover, a shorebird also exhibiting a gamey flavor (figure 6).

After dinner, the passengers adjourned to the grand salon, where the oil lamps were aided by the light of a full moon, glowing through the skylight. There were three members of the Protestant clergy on board, and so it is reasonable to assume this assemblage said prayers and sang hymns, following the usual custom on this holiday.



Figure 5



Figure 6

Since one of the ministers was the Reverend Albert Barnes, the sagacious pastor at the First Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia, it also seems likely that there was some sermonizing about slavery. Earlier that year, Barnes had been quoted by the black reformer Frederick Douglass in his famous oratory “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?”¹⁵

Notes

1. The two menus were printed by Dutton and Wentworth, the firm that also produced the *Boston Evening Transcript*.
2. The captain often provided a stove to deck passengers who also had the option of buying low-cost meals from the kitchen.
3. According to the 1860 census, slaves comprised 51% of the population in Mississippi and Louisiana; free blacks represented only 1.25% of the population in those states.
4. The steamer *Princess* was built in Cincinnati in 1855, as was its sister boat *Natchez V* that operated until 1859, when it was permanently moored at Baton Rouge as a wharf boat, serving as a hotel, depot, and storehouse.
5. Menus in the University of Houston Library from the St. Charles Hotel (March 25, 1857) and the City Hotel (December 8, 1857) contain the word “spinage.”
6. Sam Bowers Hilliard, *Hog Meat and Hoecake: Food Supply in the Old South, 1840-1860*, Southern Illinois University Press, 1972.

7. A cursory look at American menus from the 1850s suggests that there may have been more vegetables on Southern menus, but a statistical analysis of all extant menus is needed to confirm this observation.
8. A “tontine” was an investment scheme that provided dividends to the investors. In 1820, 300 people invested \$100 each to build the Tontine Hotel which opened five years later. A tontine usually terminated with the death of the last investor who by then owned all of the shares. However, according to the special terms of this agreement, each of the original shareholders could assign their futurity to another person, thereby extending the duration of the investment. When there were only seven shareholders living, the property was to be sold and the proceeds divided, which finally happened in 1908.
9. Experienced Lady, *The American Housewife*, 1841.
10. Charles Elme Francatelli, *The Modern Cook: A Practical Guide to the Culinary Art in All Its Branches*, 1859.
11. The pies were so successful that bakers in New York began to produce “Connecticut pies” and a small lunchroom called the Connecticut Pie Depot soon opened. In response, Munson changed the name of his company to Munson’s Connecticut Pies. Within five years, he established another bakery on 21st Street near Third Avenue in New York to supplement his production in New Haven.
12. In August 1851, the *Baltic* set the record for a westbound crossing, completing the trip from Liverpool to New York in 9 days and 18 hours.
13. My thanks to Andrea Broomfield for calling my attention to *Rollo on the Atlantic*, a children’s book by Jacob Abbott published in 1853, providing detailed descriptions of various aspects of a transatlantic crossing on the Collins Line.
14. Specific information about the food on the Collins Line is scarce. The regular dinner served aboard the *S. S. Baltic* on 9 November 1852 is reported in *Littell’s Living Age*, “Steam Packets: English and American,” Vol. 38, July, August, Sept., 1853, p. 170.
15. On July 5, 1852, Frederick Douglass delivered the keynote speech at the Independence Day celebration of the Ladies’ Anti-Slavery Society of Rochester, NY, quoting Rev. Albert Barnes: “There is no power out of the church that could sustain slavery an hour, if it were not sustained in it.”



Henry Voigt was born and raised in Washington, D.C. After graduating from Virginia Polytechnic Institute with a degree in mechanical engineering in 1969, he joined DuPont at one of its technical laboratories in Wilmington, Delaware. Over the course of his 38-year career with DuPont, he held a number of senior management positions, including a memorable assignment in Hong Kong. In the 1990s, he began collecting menus as a result of his interests in food, culture, and the history of everyday life. His collection of menus is one of the most significant private ones in the country, according to *Gastronomica* magazine, and may be sampled on his website theamericanmenu.com.

Joan Hassall & the Saltire Society Chapbooks: Work in Progress

BY KRISTIN BLUEMEL

In 1945, the most popular of Joan Hassall's Saltire Chapbooks, *The Marriage of Robin Redbreast and the Wren*, was published in Edinburgh by the Saltire Society. Hassall, a Londoner, had come to Edinburgh to teach printing and composition at the Edinburgh College of Art. She was 39 at the time, young enough to be willing to try a new life in a new city and old enough to have established a reputation as one of Britain's most skilled wood engravers. Her work was compared to that of the legendary 18th-century English wood engraver, Thomas Bewick. The technical, formal, and tonal qualities that earned Hassall such comparisons are evident in the cover design of *The Marriage of Robin Redbreast and the Wren*. The extraordinary control and detail, the subtle sense of humor, the allusions to the decorative elements of eighteenth-century wood engraved vignettes—all these are apparent upon initial examination. Hassall has combined rigid linear patterns with graceful curves and arcs, all directing our eyes to the central image of wee Robin and his wife, themselves encircled by the graceful petals of a flowered wreath

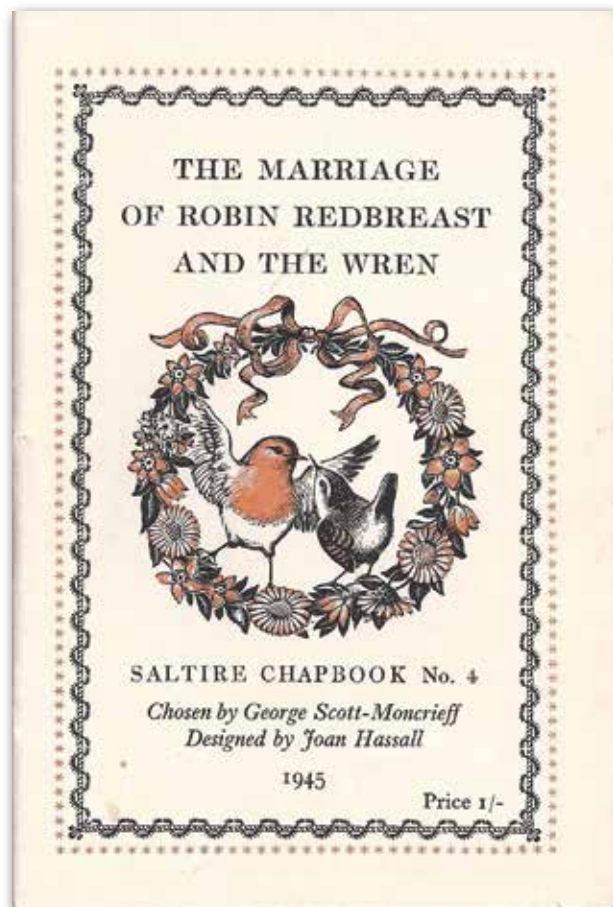


Figure 1. Cover to Marriage of Robin Redbreast

that is knotted with a bow. The pleasing symmetry of the cover, so suitable for a book that ends with a happy marriage, is typical of Hassall's ten Saltire Chapbooks, the last of which is *Rashie Coat*, published in 1951 after she had returned to England.¹ Aside from the colored inks that decorated each cover, the chapbooks tell their tales in words and pictures worked out in black and white, those common but opposing shades traditionally associated with the urgency of truth. Black type and black image on white page: words and pictures are equal in this regard, furthering the chapbooks' commitment to values of balance and harmony and equilibrium.

Each chapbook is so small—a mere 5.5 by 3.5 inches—one might assume it was designed exclusively for children. But such dimensions were not meant to allude to Beatrix Potter's turn of the century book designs, which revolutionized children's books and publishing in England, but rather 18th-century Scottish chapbooks with very different revolutionary associations. According to Rosemary Addison, a scholar of printing and book design who has written on Hassall's Scottish connections, the World-War-II period Saltire Chapbooks were intended to revive a popular Scottish tradition. Centuries before, Scottish peddlers had sold chapbooks containing subversive stories or Jacobite songs and verses through the byways and backwaters of the land.² The Saltire Chapbooks, though more elegantly designed than their 18th-century century models, were equally ephemeral. Small, fragile, compliant with wartime economy restrictions on paper, they were priced at an attractive 1/-. As such they announced themselves as lightweight paper books for the people: cheap, attractive, short, and presumably short lived. Although wood engraved illustrations in the mid-20th century were associated with fine or limited editions, these ephemeral wood engraved chapbooks produced in Scotland, representing Scottish dialect and popular Scottish children's stories, happily assume a "low" position for wood engraving within hierarchies of cultural meaning and illustrative forms.³

The Saltire Society

The Saltire Society was a fledgling institution at the time it commissioned Hassall to design the Saltire Chapbooks. Its primary aim, recorded in the first Annual Report of 1936 by Secretary Mrs. Alison Bonfield, was "restoring Scotland to its proper position as a cultural unit" through making "Scots conscious of their heritage"⁴ Looking back in order to "move forward," the Society from its beginnings saw encouragement of Scottish arts and

continued on page 22



Figure 2. *Rashie Coat*, header illustration, p. 2-3.

education as central to its mission. While it may seem odd that an explicitly nationalist cultural organization adopted as a founding principle the goal of being “entirely non political,” Bonfield wrote that it aimed “to be inclusive and not exclusive—all that was asked of members was to be friends of Scotland” Hassall, a Londoner who came to think of herself as a “friend of Scotland,” would have found this formulation congenial. A notorious perfectionist, she would also have found congenial the fifth and last principle of Bonfield’s *Saltire* manifesto: “Rejection of the second rate.” (Hassall said the chapbooks were one of “only [two] jobs I have ever done where I had complete control.”⁵) These principles served the Society well during the war years. In 1941, early in Hassall’s Edinburgh sojourn, it had 420 members; five years later, in 1946, it had more than quadrupled in size, claiming 1,725 members.

According to George Bruce, author of *The First Fifty Years of the Saltire Society*, the folk culture that the Chapbooks tried to bring to mid-20th-century readers was a heritage of “the playground.”

Bruce speculates that Scottish speech, songs, dances, tales and historical folk knowledge were kept alive longer in schoolyards than elsewhere, precisely because they were “disregarded or devalued in school”. If this is true, Scotland’s playgrounds and the *Saltire* Chapbooks are spaces of an unauthorized, unscripted Scottish culture and simultaneously treasured sites of authentic and enduring national tradition. The ambiguity of the Chapbooks’ purpose—preservation or re-creation or entertainment?—is felt in the peculiar relations of their words and pictures. The words are supposed to represent the unprofessional, spoken voice of a lost and plebian Scotland, yet the pictures represent the entirely professional, visual

imagination of the English artist, Joan Hassall. For example, Chapbook No. 6, *Whuppity Stoorie* (1946), is a silly folk tale meant to be performed by an adult for a child. It concerns a young and lovely wife who outwits her wealthy husband’s meaningless demand that she not only learn to spin before he returns from a business trip, “but to have spun a hundred hanks o’ thread.” Finding under a rock “six wee ladies in green gowns” singing as they spin on a little wheel, she is reassured by them that they will cure her husband forever of his demand for a spinning wife. Their cure of masculine irrationality lies in their mouths, which are permanently hitched up to one side, an effect we best realize through Hassall’s cover design. Invited to dinner by the young wife on the evening of her husband’s return, the six wee ladies prompt him to ask, in English, “Ladies, if it be not an uncivil question, I should like to know how it happens that all your mouths are turned away to one side?” In Scottish dialect we read, “‘Oh,’ said ilk ane at ance, ‘It’s with our constant SPIN-SPIN-SPINNING.’”

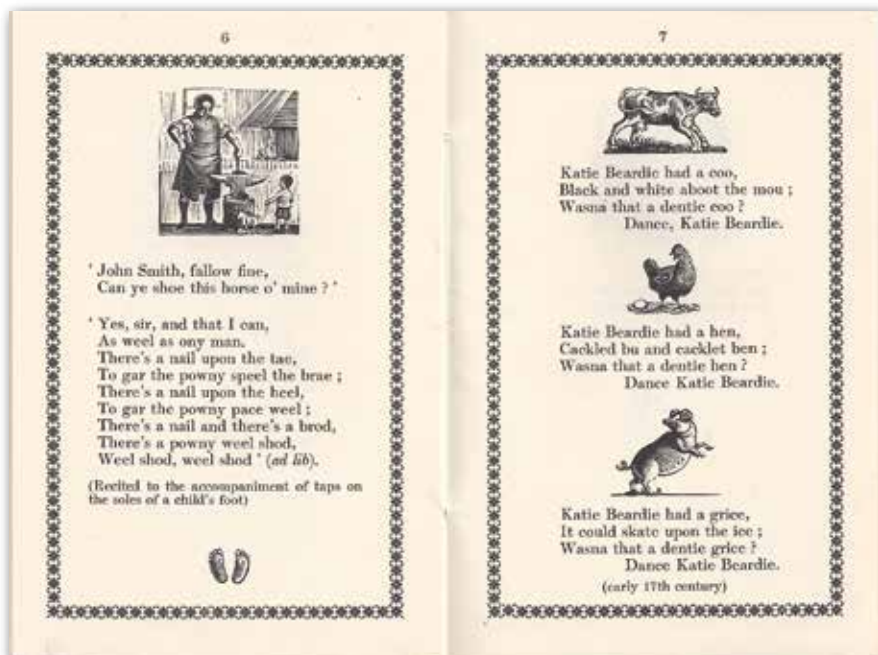


Figure 3. *Scottish Children’s Rhymes and Lullabies* p. 6-7.

The joy of the tale is partly communicated by Hassall's illustrations, partly by editor John Oliver's text, adapted from Robert Chambers's 1826 collection, *Popular Rhymes of Scotland*. The imposition of modern print upon ancestral oral culture is most blatantly conceded in *Whuppity Stoorie* upon a page turn where we read, in English, in italics, and in parentheses, "[Here speak with the mouth turned to one side, in imitation of the ladies.]." This instruction to parents or teachers more explicitly than any other element of the Chapbooks shows how *Whuppity Stoorie*, a text that aims to convey an oral history, gets caught in the associations and limitations

of modern print culture. And here we confront an instructive paradox. Hassall's wood engraved illustrations do not teach Scottish children about their heritage speech or oral culture, let alone the living culture of the playground. Rather, the chapbook wood engravings teach readers about a modern inheritance and interpretation of an artistic vision and illustrative technique associated with Thomas Bewick. More importantly, they teach readers that art and women artists could thrive in the most unlikely of environments in the most unfortunate and violent of periods of an excessively unfortunate and violent century.

Endnotes

1. The Saltire Chapbooks, in order, are: No. 1, *Sixteenth-Century Poems* (1943), No. 2, *Mally Lee* (1944); No. 3, *Seasonal Poems* by William Dunbar (1944); the beloved No. 4, *The Marriage of Robin Redbreast and the Wren* (1945); No. 5, *Songs of the 'Forty-Five* (1945); No. 6, *Whuppity Stoorie* (1946); No. 8, *Old Scottish Christmas Hymns* (1947); No. 9, *Scottish Children's Rhymes and Lullabies* (1948); No. 10, *The Fause Knight and Other Fancies* (1950); No. 12, *Rashie Coat* (1951). All published by The Saltire Society, Edinburgh. According to Rosemary Addison, "Joan Hassall, Wood-engraver" in *textualities.net*, N.p., (2005), Web, Accessed 3 Aug. 2012, <<http://textualities.net/rosemary-adduition/joan-hassall-wood-engraver/>>, the missing No. 7, *Six Poems of the Nineteenth Century* (1946), is not Hassall's, nor is No. 13, *The Siller Gun* (1952). No. 11, *Scotland on Freedom* (1951), was never issued.
2. See Addison, 3.
3. The private presses that made wood engraving synonymous with fine printing and the interwar period are the Golden Cockerel Press, founded 1920 by Hal Taylor but made famous by Robert Gibbings who assumed control 1924, and the Gregynog Press, founded 1922 by Margaret and Gwendoline Davies. In the 1930s-1940s, Joan Hassall did not publish with either of these presses, but rather with more mainstream or "middlebrow" presses such as

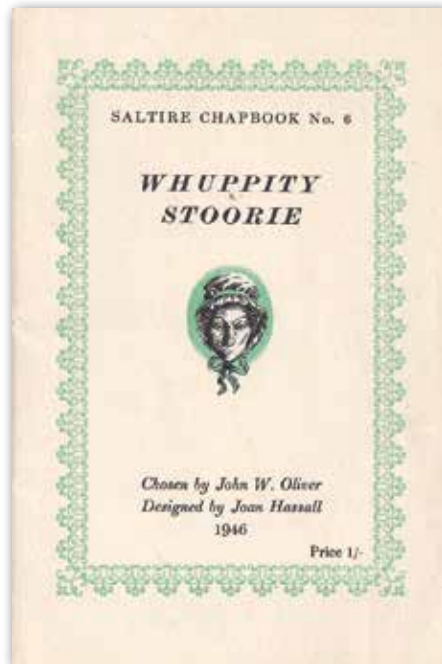


Figure 4. figure 4: cover of Whoopie Stoorie.

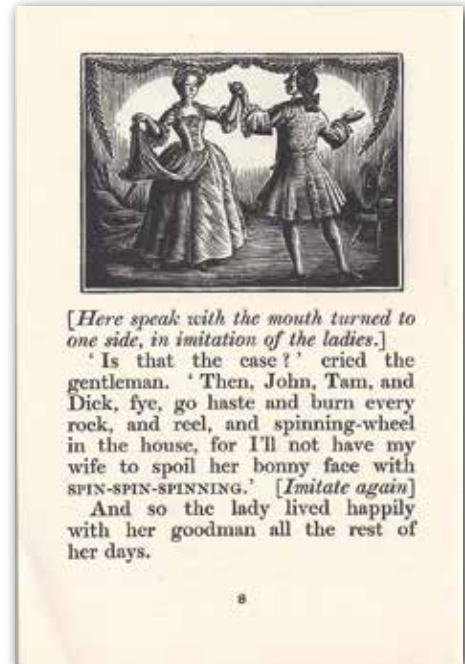


Figure 5. Whuppity Stoorie interior, p. 8.

London's Heinemann, Harrup, Jonathan Cape, and Rupert Hart-Davis and Edinburgh's Oliver and Boyd. In 1949 she published her first wood engraved illustrations in a Folio Society limited edition and by the early 1950s she had started publishing with the elite Oxford University Press.

4. See George Bruce, "To Foster and Enrich": The First Fifty Years of the Saltire Society (Edinburgh: Saltire Society, 1986), 16.
5. Joan Hassall. Letter to Ruari McLean. 25 Aug. 1950. MS. Joan Hassall Papers. National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh.
6. Joan Hassall. Letter to Ruari McLean. 25 Aug. 1950. MS. Joan Hassall Papers. National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh.
7. Joan Hassall. Letter to Ruari McLean. 12 Feb. 1952. MS. Joan Hassall Papers. National Library of Scotland.
8. See George Bruce, "To Foster and Enrich": *The First Fifty Years of the Saltire Society* (Edinburgh: Saltire Society, 1986), 16.

Kristin Bluemel is Professor of English and Wayne D. McMurray Chair of the Humanities at Monmouth University. Trained as a scholar of British modernism and something she calls intermodernism, she is now working on a book about women wood engravers and cultural hierarchies in mid-20th-century Britain. Research for this book inspired her novice efforts of collecting wood engraved print objects. Among those objects is a treasured set of Saltire Chapbooks.



Interesting Books

Culinary Ephemera, An Illustrated History, by William Woys Weaver, a volume in California Studies in Food and Culture, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2010. 299 pages, hardbound www.ucpress.edu

When Dr. Weaver discovered that there was not yet a reference book that dealt with the history of culinary advertising - the paper trails of American

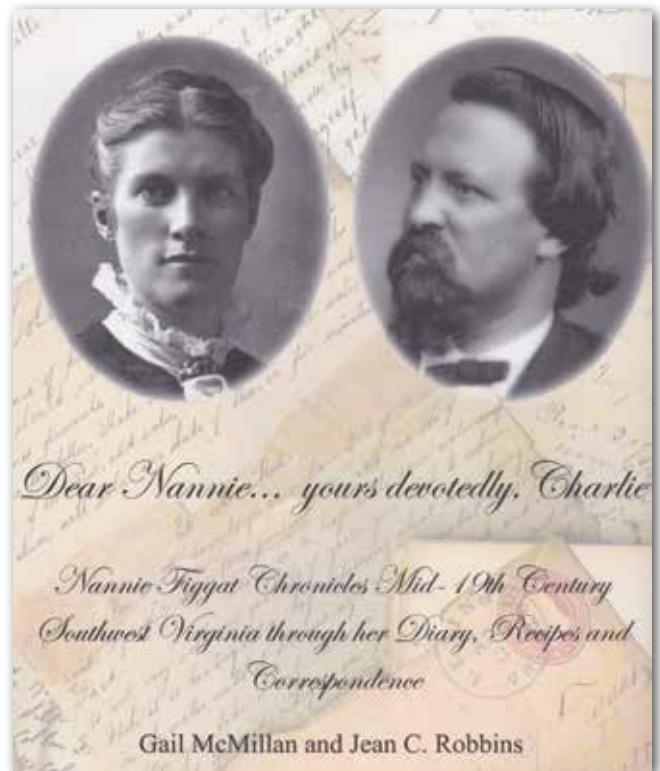
bag retrieved in 1889 from the sawdust floor of a theater in Allentown PA. But the roadside litter of today is largely related to food, to eating, and to the social interactions of people eating together. Dr. Weaver deconstructs individual pieces of paper ephemera the way art historians unravel paintings - image and context. For instance, in essaying the persistence of the Quaker Oats William Penn figure using different promotionals, he reveals that the Religious Society of Friends took the Quaker Oats company to court but lost the case - afterward the figure morphed to look more like Benjamin

Franklin. He also illustrates that the image of William Penn that Quaker Oats took over in 1877 was the 1846 registered trademark of Dr. Swayne's Compound Syrup of Wild Cherry. Penn is shown under the Treaty Oak, Indian treaty rolled in his hand - to convey the trustworthiness of the patent medicine. One of my favorite single pieces is a 1940 menu from the El Mirador restaurant in

Acapulco, designed by Diego Rivera, and promoting the 50th anniversary of Carta Blanca beer. Dr. Weaver observes that Rivera was making a visual commentary on the debased role of women in Mexican culinary tradition, while the menu's offerings were tailored to, as Frida Kahlo would have said, Gringolandia - ordinary American hotel fare has been translated into Spanish, with the most expensive dish of lobster appearing in translation. Such a piece of saved ephemera is a trophy, "like the stuffed heads of wild animals representing the successful safari, *objets sanctifiés* that are similar to the artifacts brought back by religious pilgrims in the Middle Ages. Indeed, culinary tourism is a sort of pilgrimage, a search for identity and fulfillment that can only be confirmed by the transforming agony of travel." This book is a great 'trophy' to bring home to any ephemerist's kitchen.

Dear Nannie ... yours devotedly, Charlie: Nannie Figgat Chronicles Mid-19th Century Southwest Virginia through her Diary, Recipes and Correspondence, by Gail McMillan and Jean C. Robbins, Botetourt County Historical Society Museum, 2013. 277 pages, hardbound www.bothistsoc.org

foodways - he determined he would write his own. Arranged encyclopedically ("Americans Abroad," "Business Cards," "Match Covers," etc.) the very handsomely-designed book delivers a wealth of images and commentary - but the author still mourns what had to be left out! It is a huge subject, not restricted to time or place. His starting point was a popcorn and candy



It is fair to assume that most ephemerists who find a group of family letters are moved to say, at least in passing, “these would make a great book.” And, indeed, the story of interconnected lives through their correspondence, bolstered with good contextual research, is the heart of interpreting everyday life of the past. Few of these books get written – but this one, based on letters, diaries, and recipe compilations of a mother and daughter (see sidebar for the research trail) came to fruition thanks to two dedicated researchers and a supportive historical society. It might be assumed that full transcripts of the letters, etc. might be as well served if placed in an on-line archive. But that has also been done. And this folio-sized handsome book offers the chance to ‘see’ some of Nannie Figgat’s letters and recipes fully reproduced, along with color photographs of meals cooked from the 19th century recipes by former Hotel Roanoke Executive Chef Billie Raper. Nannie’s letters, 1859 to the 1880s, are full of epistolary ‘boilerplate’ but there are flashes of intense emotion (the death of a child, even of a beloved slave) and intriguing glimpses of everyday life (an evening spent wool picking for a linsey dress). But the surprise excitement is the chronicling of Charlie Figgat’s downfall – disappearing as an embezzler in 1895, bringing down the bank he worked for. The chapter on the culinary history of the family is of particular interest – transcribing not just the recipes, but tying them to the history of food storage and preparation in that part of the country in that period. Complete with maps, family tree, tables of inventories, recipe ingredients, etc. this is as complete a study of a family archive as could be imagined.

THE ARCHIVES CONNECTION

The Research Journey that Became *Dear Nannie*

This adventure began in 2000 when, as the head of Special Collections at Virginia Tech, I purchased a collection of ephemera from 1800s southwestern Virginia from a Philadelphia manuscripts and rare books dealer, Carmen Valentino. Among the correspondence, diary, recipe books, weaving patterns, store ledgers, practice books, and other bits, were several items from a single family, the Thomas G. Godwins of Fincastle.

Jump ahead 9 years. Jean Robbins, leader of the Peacock-Harper Culinary History Collection Advisory Board at VT, suggested we write an article about the manuscript recipe books. She unraveled the mystery that Nannie was Nancy G. Figgat who autographed her recipe book on Oct. 29, 1860, and the Ann Godwin who signed her “Memorandum Book Jan 5, 1856” which included the C M Figgat “House Keeping Expenses for the Year 1861.” I verified that Nannie’s mother, Martha Mary Godwin, wrote the other recipe book.

Our research quickly took us way beyond the recipes. Online searches of the catalogs at the Library of Virginia and the Virginia Historical Society led us to take a trip Richmond where we discovered 33 letters (1859-1865) written by Nannie and her husband. The winter of 2010/11 was conducive to transcribing the diary, letters and recipes while Jean combed culinary history resources and analyzed the recipes.

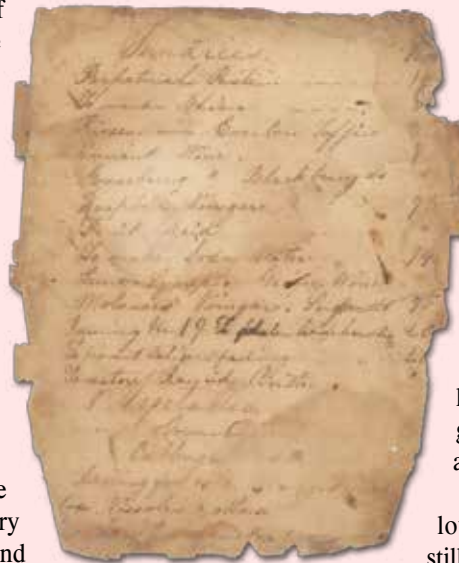
Plenty of foot- work was involved. Jean’s curiosity about the Godwins and Figgats led her to Lexington and Washington and Lee University library’s Special Collections where she found these families in graduation records, photographs, WPA documents, and newspaper clippings. At

the Virginia Military Institute she found a reward poster. The Botetourt Clerk of Court Office provided marriage licenses and estate wills listing kitchen equipment, utensils, and furniture. The Virginia Tech library where I work provided hints about various resources in its online catalog that were largely in the Special Collections Reading Room. Insurance maps and city directories at the Roanoke City Public Library revealed the living arrangements of Nannie and her children and often supplied their occupations.

From the comfort of my home my public library’s subscription to “Fold3 History and Genealogy Archives” and “Heritage Quest Online” gave me online access to US census records and Confederate Army records. I accessed the Library of Congress’s *Chronicling America* (<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/>) where newspapers documented Charlie’s banking debacle and provided illustrated ads for their son’s “fancy grocery.” You never know what you’ll find in an online search of the worldwide web, but I was shocked

when Google searches led to the Godwin-Ammen Family, a history of the Roanoke Country Club that the same son helped establish, the graduation record (in Tewksbury, Massachusetts!) of one of their daughters, and a booklet describing church renovations illustrated with a stained glass window memorializing Nannie.

As a librarian who loves to research, I’m still amazed at the wealth of information that we found about the Figgats and Godwins of Fincastle, Virginia. But even after four years of research and the publication of *Dear Nannie... Yours Devotedly, Charlie*, I can’t resist the urge. Every once in a while I do another Internet search, half afraid of what I’ll find.



The Nannie's Index to Miscellaneous Recipes

AUCTION REVIEW

“How History Unfolds on Paper” reaches \$1.3 million

Bonham’s April 7 auction of Treasures from the Caren Archive might be a milestone in Ephemera’s ‘Coming of Age.’ Eric Caren, to a certain extent, wishes it were not so, but collectors of all stripes take more notice when big money is involved. He was moved to remember the consternation when the late John Jenkins listed in a catalog the 1787 issue of the *Pennsylvania Packet* that first printed the U.S. Constitution for \$85,000 – when he had bought it for under \$2,000. It, of course, sold and has been resold for much more. The present report that an international auction firm did



so well with a sale that was strictly paper is testament to a growing appreciation for the cultural value of ephemera. This is evident in the number of museum exhibitions devoted to, or rich in, ephemera; and the growing cadre of rare book dealers who are discovering the pleasure and profit in representing ephemera.

It must be said that the sale was rich in fairly rarefied examples of ephemera (see four of the high realizations) – the newspaper portion of this collection of Caren treasures was a ‘shadow’ of the one presently at the Newseum (see *The Ephemera Journal* volume 14 issue 2, page 24), and another ‘shadow’ collection of varied paper genres sold at Sotheby’s in 2012. But yet another ‘shadow’

collection, of 200,000 items, formed of the full range of ephemera (from postcards to broadsides; strongest in Americana but including much British and Western European material), is being offered whole. Eric feels this is comparable in scope (1650s-1990s) to the Marian S. Carson Collection at the Library of Congress, and is keen that it go to a comparable institution (both Columbia University and the University of Arkansas have expressed interest).

Eric is always building ‘shadow’ collections of American history – and emphasizes that he gets as much pleasure from discovering ephemera priced in the double digits as in quintuple. At the Ephemera 34 fair he spent every hour available to dealers



(someone else manning his booth) buying treasures – each one something he had not seen before. And that is the strength in ephemera – and why it should not be codified the way paper collectibles such as comic books and baseball cards have been. We need to feel the ‘stuff’ and know the joys of discovery.



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.ephemerassociety.org/events.html

Please email calendar listings to: diane@ephmerassociety.org

New Members

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

William Anastasio
338 Main Street
Chatham, NJ 07928

Kendall Bassett
1805 58th Street NE
Tacoma, WA 98422

Cindy Batterson-Rice
Gamble House
4 Westmoreland Place
Pasadena, CA 91103

Anne Bromer
Bromer Booksellers, Inc.
607 Boylston Street
Boston, MA 02116

Kevin Brown
Geographicus Rare Antique Maps
201 West 105th Street, #42
New York, NY 10025

Mark Brumberg
Boomerang Booksellers
139 Federal Street
Northampton, MA 01062-2703

Beth Campbell
Washington Antiquarian Book Fair
3614 Livingston Street NW
Washington, DC 20015

Fern Cohen
221 Sands Point Road
Sands Point, NY 11050

Robert Denby
25 Meadowbrook Lane
Skillman, NJ 08558

Cynthia Gibson
99 Bank Street, #4I
New York, NY 10014

Eric Grangeon
Eric Grangeon Rare Books
4 rue de l'Odéon
Paris, 75006 France

Dawn Hamman
334 Rio Terrace
Venice, FL 34285

Lisa Hand
Wind Horse Antiques
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Aurora, OR 97002

Robert Harrington
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Leila Narvid
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Sarasota, FL 34243

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Laura Verlaque
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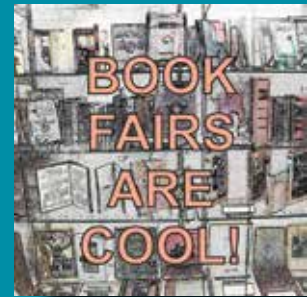
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When I see well-dressed demagogues filling the ears of the people with lies, just as the traitors of the South have done, only to get the workingmen aroused to deeds of crime and violence, while they themselves take good care to keep out of the way, I wish I had the voice of a thunderer, that I might say to them--*Don't unchain the Tiger!*

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