Digitizing Ephemera and Parsing an 1862 European Itinerary

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Digital History

Creating a Digital Archive

This poster/demo illustrates some of the advantages of digital publication over print for a particular kind of socio-historical project. It uses as an example three incomplete sets of sources: a travel iournal, herbaria, and ephemera from an 1862 tour of England and Europe that was undertaken by Wheaton College founder Eliza Baylies Wheaton, her husband Laban Morey Wheaton, and his cousin David Emory Holman

During the 1862 journey, Eliza Baylies Wheaton kept receipts for her housekeeping transactions in London, and she compiled a travel journal and herbaria, thus leaving for the historian multiple genres of accounts of her interests and experiences-financial. descriptive, and botanical. The resulting narratives convey the texture of daily life for a nineteenth-century traveler and reflect the wide-ranging interests of a woman who cherished her husband and friends, loved art and gardens, practiced devout Christianity, painstakingly recorded numerous facts about tombs, paintings, and tapestries she saw, and pursued every opportunity to visit sites associated with Napoleon Bonaparte. Such narratives are conveyed less than optimally in traditional print publications, at least partly because cost considerations would prohibit inclusion of full-color plates for presenting such an obscure collection.

Digital presentation allows interactive viewing of the document images that we suggest might approximate the series of experiences that led to collection of the ephemera and specimens for the herbaria alongside the recording of the travel journal. Further, including links to images of the primary sources introduces a kind of transparency that is missing from traditional print methods for presenting results of historical research. Digital presentation enhances the historian's ability to recreate a past that all too often remains obscure-a set of events from daily life that includes not only the experiences of well-todo tourists who created and collected the items in archival collections but also the boardinghouse keepers, laundresses, and shopkeepers with whom they interacted Digitally presented history can be social history at its best.



Financial Records

Business, Work, and Gender

Beyond its local interest for friends and alumnae/i of Wheaton College, the project has larger historical value in its attention to the 1862 journey in the context of changing economic and political conditions in Great Britain, Europe, and the United States in the mid-nineteenth century. The group of travelers who created the archive presented in this poster/demo combined business with tourism while in London, as the two men shared financial interest in the production of straw hats. Holman took with him on the journey a prototype that demonstrated his innovation for machines used to shape the crowns of nats, and he established residency in London to begin the process of registering a patent for his machine. A patent drawing has been found at the British Library. While Holman continued to board in London, Eliza Baylies Wheaton and her husband toured in the south and west of England and in the south of Wales.

The journey also represented a transitional moment in the economic experiences of a well-to-do white woman from the Northeastern United States. The project thus builds on and contributes to the growing historical literature about Anglo-American women and their economic lives in North America in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Like many microhistorical articles and monographs, this portion of the project focuses on the records left by an individual, digging down into the archival record to explore the financial details of a moment in one woman's life and explicate their larger historical significance.

The ephemera that the Wheatons collected included such seemingly mundane materials as laundry lists, boarding accounts, and receipts from restaurants and hotels. Such materials resemble the household accounts that Eliza B. Wheaton was accustomed to keeping at home, and they demonstrate her continued responsibility for economic interactions with women workers while she and her husband and their traveling companion were away from home. Examining her household accounts alongside the social narrative she created in the travel journal demonstrates parallels between the pleasant tasks of sociability and the more quotidian concerns of housekeeping, whether Wheaton was at home or away. The herbaria add still another dimension, augmenting comments in the travel journal on such engineering feats as the Thames tunnel with botanical specimens identified according to the historical or cultural sites where the were collected to offer a view of the traveler as scientific collector, of both facts and specimens

Since Eliza B. Wheaton was widowed three years after she and her husband returned to their home in Massachusetts, the financial records from the European journey document a significant moment in her economic life. They supplement a large number of cashbooks and other financial documents that she accumulated over the next forty years. Collected during a transitional period after she had begun to learn the details of her husband's business affairs, the 1862 ephemera suggest the kinds of financial responsibilities to which Wheaton was accustomed during her marriage and the preparation that keeping household accounts gave her for handling her investments and managing her wealth after her husband's death. The travel journal and herbaria combine with other ephemera to document the interests that she shared with her beloved husband and the pleasures of their European adventure. The richness of this documentary collection and its multiple genres make digital publication the most appropriate method of dissemination for this proiect.

Historical/Digital Narrative/Archive

This project adds to such explorations of the impact of the digital on the practice of history as the American Council of Learned Societies' collaboration with the American Historical Association and other professional organizations in the Humanities Edock project. It is imparted in part by the work of William G. Thomas III and Edward L. Ayers at the University of Winginia and d Daniel J. Cohen and Roy Rosensweig at George Plason University. And it may be read as being in conversation with the B. 1000 renet tricemost project and the sping 2010 Stage of Thomas To Conce conference as the University of Winginia.

Itineraries

Americans in Europe

travel journal

In our exploration of the documents and ephemera that survive from the 1862 journey,

we spent considerable time focused on our travelers' itineraries and how we know them

Baylies Wheaton's travel journal is incomplete and is only one of many items in the

paying special attention to what the materials in the collection do and do not tell us. Eliza

collection that document the Wheatons' European summer. We have used the collection's ephemera—which include trade cards, lists, and notes, in addition to the receipts, herbaria,

and boarding accounts-to fill in gaps in the account of the journeys contained in the

The travel journal stopped after a description of a visit to Windsor Castle on May 29,

1862, and then picked up again in mid-July when the Wheatons and Holman crossed the

English Channel to the Continent Receipts and Fliza Baylies Wheaton's herbaria showed

herbaria have posed particular intrepretive challenges. Although none of the pages are dated, they reveal the travelers' itineraries outside London and act as a nineteenth-

tons actually visited; Italy was a particular puzzle.

concluded that the Wheatons did not actually see these sites

century version of a photo album. The herbaria also raise questions about which sites the

The Wheaton Family Papers includes a copy of Samuel Rogers's Italy: A Poem, an example

beginnings of the Grand Tour. Yet other than the herbaria, there are no documents from

the journey to suggest our travelers' presence in Italy. Whilst the herbaria once led us to believe that the Wheatons had visited Florence, Rome and Pompeii, our parsing of their

interary through hotel receipts precluded the possibility of their having had time to visit Italy during this trip. Perhaps most significantly as we sought to understand our travelers

motivations and actions, we considered the political instability of Italy in 1862, noting that

Garibaldi's army marched on Rome in July and August. Herbaria pages regarding Rome

include pasted-in images, apparently cut from a set of small photographs. We have

of popular culture in the United States connected to European tourism in the mid-

nineteenth century. The book's presence in the collection suggests that Eliza Baylies Wheaton understood that Italy had been the focus of European tourism since the

us that during June, she and her husband traveled in southwestern England and Wales. The

Wrisig social history in the way that we model here mores beyond the Humanian E-Book projects production of XML-coole monographilterests to create a digital version of the walag archive enriched by historical interpretation and made accessible strongh noise policitation. Nac concidentally the Whatton Family Papers, the larger collection of which the strand documents are a part in a Voltet. One concerning the Whatton Family Papers, the larger collection of which the strand documents are a part in a Voltet. One concerning the Whatton Family Papers, the larger collection and which the strand documents are a part in a Voltet. One project the Calabing Heiden Special Collections and Article and the special collections of the weight of the Stadow project or the Debitstory website's presentation of the ary of Waiten medwife Method Special Collections. In this way, the "finished" version of our project might again to parallel—on a much smaller scale—the Wiley of the Stadow project or the Debitstory website's presentation of the ary of Maine medwife Method Special Collections.

Like the DoHstory site, our demo takes advantage of the opportunity digital technologies provide to include both images of primary sources and transcriptions where appropriate. Thus, we are able to include these images in ways that more beyond their use a illustrational print nurratives, making transparents some of the work of historical interpretation and storystilling. Since the DoHstory site is, like Laural Tatcher Urlich's moorgraph, microhaborcial in its focus on Balliar and the work it represents a project of more managable size that has its incivially of the badkow project, in which Nears and Nearnost cales against a instancing all available test sources for August County, Nyinia, and Franklin County, Point, et al. (WCDH), the larger undertaking of which the endeavor presented here is a part, and 2004 and we expect to cominue work on its for at last the most tem years.

ortion of the project, we have followed many practitioners of digital history in seeking to take advantage of the ways that mapping software allows us to convey the movements of people across time and space. Here, we hop Ily to employ an interface similar to that used by the Digital Concord project and described by Amy Earhart. Like Digital Concord, WCDH uses GoogleEarth rather than Arc-GIS, a choice that results at least in part from our preference for the more spen GoogleEarth platform, which we can use on our Mars. Whilst Digital Goncord operates through a Google map conversion interface, our demo cals to sources through GoogleEarth. Since the version demonstrated here represents an initial effort and is tall very much a very in progress, we are particularly interested in suggestions and domnents about this choice and alternatives.



Conclusions

Our reading of the financial records combines with our parsing of the European itinerary to tell particular stories about the Wheatons' travels in England and Europe in the spring and summer of 1862. Our being able to display images and transcriptions of the primary documents alongside our interpretations and to map the sites to which the documents refer gives audiences the opportunity to weigh our analysis and interact with primary sources in ways that are quite foreign to traditional print methods of presenting historical analysis. Writing and publishing social history in the way we model here creates a hybrid of the traditional print narrative as a closed interpretation and the analog archive as a space restricted by place and time to produce a demonstration of digital history as an open-ended and interactive process. Since the piece functions as both archive and narrative, open to alternative or supplemental interpretations from our audiences, it surfaces both the often hidden interpretations that go into the making of all archives and the processes of historical research and interpretation

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