

Digitizing Ephemera and Parsing an 1862 European Itinerary

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This interactive digital poster demonstrates 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 journal, 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. Linking TEI-compliant XML text with images of these sources, our poster/demo offers an approximation of the experiences that led to the collection of the items. Our interactive digital poster also includes links with historical maps of England, Wales, France, Italy, Switzerland, the Rhine Valley, and Belgium. Clicking on a location brings up relevant sections of the interpretive historical essay as well as images of relevant pages of the travel journal, herbaria, and ephemera. An interactive timeline offers an alternate method of accessing the data.

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 the engineering details of the new tunnel under the Thames that connected London to Greenwich, 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. These texts and collections have been digitized as part of the Wheaton College Digital History Project.

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-to-do 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.

1. Financial Records

Beyond its local interest for friends and alumni of Wheaton College, the project has larger historical value in its attention to the 1862 journey in the context of changing economic 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 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 hats, 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, and they traveled in Europe for two and a half weeks in July 1862.

The journey also represented a transitional moment in the economic experiences of a well-

to-do white woman from the United States. The poster/demo 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 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 they 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 receipts 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.

2. Itineraries

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, paying special attention to what the materials in the collection do and do not tell us. Eliza Baylies Wheaton's travel journal is incomplete and is only one of many items in the 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 travel journal. Our poster/demo includes images of these documents and their XML coded transcriptions.

The travel journal stopped after a description of a journey to Windsor on May 29, 1862, and then picked up again in mid-July when the Wheatons crossed the English Channel to the Continent. Eliza Baylies Wheaton's herbaria show us that during June, she and her husband traveled around southern England with London as their base. The herbaria have posed particular challenges for scanning, transcription, coding, and interpretation. Although none of the pages are dated, they reveal the couple's itineraries outside London and act as a nineteenth-century version of a photo album. The herbaria also raise questions about the sites the Wheatons actually visited; Italy was a particular puzzle.

The Wheaton Family Papers includes a copy of Samuel Rogers's *Italy: A Poem*, an example 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 the importance of Italy as the focus of European tourism since the 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 visited Florence, Rome and Pompeii,

our parsing of their itinerary through surviving 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, probably because the Wheatons did not actually see these sites.

Our reading of the laundry lists and boarding house receipts 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 gives audiences the opportunity to weigh our analysis and comment upon it in ways that are quite foreign to the usual methods of presenting historical analysis.

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