

Digital Image Projects

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John Tenniel and the American Civil War:

Political Cartoons from Punch,
1860-1865

Project description:

John Tenniel is best known as the original illustrator of Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass. Before teaming up with Lewis Carroll, he was the chief cartoonist for the British periodical Punch, a weekly journal of political and social satire, and is regarded as one of the pioneers in developing the genre of the political cartoon as we know it today. Each issue of Punch featured a "principal cartoon," printed full page on a single side of the paper for highest quality reproduction under the standards of the time.

Between 1860-1865 Tenniel produced some 56 cartoons commenting on the conflict in America from a sometimes very biased British perspective. These would be of potential interest to anyone dealing with topics such as the history of diplomacy and international relations during the Civil War, the development of the political cartoon as a genre, or the relationship of popular illustration to high art. Because Tenniel maintained high standards of draftsmanship, and as Punch appealed to an erudite upper class readership, these cartoons offer fascinating insights into the social life of Victorian England, and also provide useful resources for costume and design history.

I have scanned the Tenniel cartoons as 20 MB TIFF files from actual original volumes of Punch in the collection of the University of Minnesota libraries. I next created descriptive cataloguing in fielded Filemaker records for each cartoon, including Library of Congress subject headings and a keyword field for historic and allegorical figures—such as Abraham Lincoln, Prime Minister Palmerston, John Bull, and Brother Jonathan (the predecessor to Uncle Sam). The final component of this project includes analytical notes for each cartoon based on my own research into topical allusions, language, literary and art historical references, and other background information.

The TIFF files and cataloguing are in the public domain. My analytical notes may be used with permission.

American Sheet Music of the early Twentieth Century

Selections from the Gertrude Goodrich Battles Collection

Project description:

This project includes around 50 selected examples (dating from 1899 - early 1920s) of sheet music covers from the Gertrude Goodrich Battles Collection, owned by my wife, Katherine Battles Kohl. Before radio broadcasting and sound motion picture tie-ins changed the way songs were promoted in the late 1920s, the music industry was focused on the sale of sheet music for individuals to play—and display—on their parlor pianos. Music publishers lavished great care and expense in the design of unique and eye-catching covers such as these, which are not only wonderful examples of what constituted cutting-edge graphic design a century ago, but which also provide valuable insights into American social history. I can imagine these being of interest to anyone teaching the history of graphic design, illustration, and typography; also costume history, American popular culture -- and even topics such as the use of humor by a dominant culture to shape popular stereotypes of racial and ethnic identities.

My project includes, again, 20 MB TIFF file scans from the original covers. Also again, there's full descriptive cataloging in the form of fielded Filemaker records for each cover, including Library of Congress subject headings. There are separate fields for composers, lyricists, and cover artists. This material is in the public domain.