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## “Divertissements for Young People” *Book-Based Games and Game-Based Books in Nineteenth-Century America*

BY LAURA WASOWICZ



Figure 1. The card game of Dr. Busby, 1840s, with edges color-coded for the ‘family’ groups. Designed by Anne Wales Abbot, published in Salem MA by W. & S.B. Ives. [All images courtesy The American Antiquarian Society.]

New England was a significant center for both children’s book and paper toy production between 1840 and 1890 when American children’s print culture was flourishing amid the market expansion, technological developments, and entrepreneurial genius that imbued the transatlantic print trade.

Five brief case studies exemplify the children’s print market from a loose network of experimental regional enterprises to an established industry dominated by major brands, both commercial and literary.

**W. & S.B. Ives of Salem, Massachusetts.** The first commercial blockbuster card game produced in Antebellum America was *The Improved and Illustrated Game of Dr. Busby*.<sup>1</sup> (Figures 1 & 2) This game was devised by author Anne Wales Abbot, who was employed by the Salem, Mass. publisher W. & S.B. Ives to make a game out of wood-engraved images the firm had in stock. The daughter of Congregational clergyman Abiel Abbot from nearby Beverly, Miss Abbot (1808-1908) wrote didactic stories for children, including *How to Spoil a Good Citizen* (1848), which denounced the Mexican-American War.<sup>2</sup> Active in Salem from 1837 to 1853, brothers William and Stephen Bradshaw Ives did miscellaneous job printing and issued didactic children’s stories but

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# Protest Ephemera: Real Protestors: Real and Merely Realistic

BY BARBARA FAHS CHARLES

In November and December 2016, I watched online in amazement as the potential magnitude of the Women's March on Washington, called for January 21, 2017, the day after the inauguration of Donald Trump as the 45th president of the United States, grew exponentially. Still, I didn't personally decide to participate until after the New Year when I responded to an appeal for volunteers to be "WMW Local Ambassadors" to "provide a warm welcome and information to our out-of-town guests, help to smooth the movement of people to and from the March, and serve as the eyes and ears of the DC Local Logistics Team."<sup>1</sup> With an assignment,

I could feel I was making a productive contribution and justify (to myself) avoiding work for a day on the long overdue graphic layouts for a coming exhibition. And, since the key players for our museum client were also women, I was reasonably confident that they would not only understand, but approve. I hadn't participated in a protest march for nearly forty-five years, not since the heyday of anti-Vietnam War and Impeach Nixon rallies in the late 60s and early 70s. Never had I had even a modicum of responsibility.

I rose uncommonly early Saturday morning and checked off my WMW Local Ambassadors to do/to bring list: layered clothing, hat, gloves, comfortable socks and shoes, trimmed toe nails, charged phone with key contact numbers, backup power, a couple of bottles of water, lots of nibbles for the day. I had everything except the small, clear backpack that was required if you wore one, so with stuffed pockets, I headed out at 5:30 am. I began to see hints of the mood of the day as I walked the 13 blocks to the meeting point for my "team." At the first corner, I passed a house with its doorway draped in black and the words "In Mourning for Our Nation." On other streets, small lawn signs with "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere" or other quotes from Martin Luther King had popped up in the tiny front yards. Even the Folger Shakespeare Library had weighed in, decorating the side of a city tour bus with "No legacy is so rich as honesty," from *All's Well That Ends Well*. (Figure 1) For the most part, I was focused on the day ahead, unclear what to think or expect.

At six am, our small group in bright orange vests picked up our "Women's March Information" signs and headed out in pairs to our posts, mine at First Street and East



Figure 1. Photograph from the Women's March on Washington, Washington DC, January 21, 2017, by Barbara Fahs Charles (the following six photographs have the same provenance.)

Capitol Street, in front of the east façade of the Capitol. Slowly the marchers started coming. Then more, and more, and more. Their spirit was universally upbeat, though frankly I wondered how some, who had protested 40 or 50 years earlier, would survive the day, having already walked two miles from their buses. Standing just a block from the Capitol, most thought they had arrived. We had to explain reality and options—through the Capitol grounds (to our surprise, the police were letting marchers in) and hit a wall of people on the other side, or a longer, more open route circling to the north, or first a stop at the Lutheran Church for snacks and coffee, or the Folger Shakespeare Library for a rest stop.

I tried to field questions quickly, but often stopped to admire the wit and sincerity of the signs. When the marchers were willing, I photographed first and then gave directions. Many messages were personal against President Trump. "In Your Gut You Know He's Nuts" was milder than most. Focusing on his self-proclaimed abuse of women another read "Trump Sexual Predator" with an illustration of Trump groping the Statue of Liberty. A Darth Vaderish-looking older man, in black hoodie and trench coat, delighted in showing me his double-sided sign with "No Trump... No KKK... No Fascists in the USA" on one side and "Nie Mein Führer" on the other.

Others were extremely earnest, advocating a variety of causes. A mother carried one of the most thoughtful signs of the day: "Let's trade 1 Donald Trump for 10,000 Refugee Men, Women and Children," while her daughters each had their own signs: "Don't Mourn Organize" with three fists and "Cultivate Resistance" with a blossoming thistle. Right afterwards, a beautifully hand-painted banner "Respect the Work That Makes All Other Work Possible"

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Figure 2.



Figure 3.



Figure 4.

for Domestic Workers United arrived. (Figure 2) Each busload of marchers brought new creative approaches. A wordless banner with hands in multiple colors on one side of an American flag, as surfing in on the stripes, and arms with dollar-sign cuff links and small hands strangling the flag to cut off the flow was fantastic. If I was a museum curator and could only collect one sign, this would be the one. (Figure 3) My colleagues had to leave at the end of our shift, but I stayed on as we had heard that there were long backups of buses along I-95 coming into Washington and the surges of eager marchers continued.

My four-hour stint evolved to nearly eight. By 1:45 pm, the last of the bus groups seemed to have arrived and in good conscience I could finally leave my post. I stashed my vest and sign at a friend's house and set off to join the march myself, continuing to photograph as I worked my way down toward the Mall. Resting on a planter near the National Museum of the American Indian were a quartette of women dressed as suffragists each with an on-target black and white sign, such as "Respect Existence or Expect Resistance!" (Figure 4) I flowed with the marchers along Constitution Avenue, enjoying the diversity of statements and the reactions of participants. A couple on a tractor held a simple request "Don't Call Us Radicals We are Informed Citizens" (Figure 5); not far from "I'm Queer I'm here & I will not disappear! [sic]" and next to "White Silence is Violence."

I was struck by the irony of Benjamin Franklin standing stoically in front of the Old Post Office Building, now the Trump Hotel. Despite the omni-present hotel security, someone had cradled a red, white, and blue banner in the statue's arms (Figure 6). At his feet, a small sign "This is NOT normal" could have expressed Franklin's own sentiments. (It reminded me of the wonderful exhibition we had designed for the Tercentennial of Franklin's birth; see *The Ephemera Journal*, Vol 11, 2005.) The march ended peacefully at the south lawn of the White House, which was protected by a flimsy wooden snow fence that was continually collapsing from the press of the crowd and then respectfully lifted back up again at the request of the march



Figure 5.

volunteers. Many marchers threw their signs over the fence toward the White House creating a colorful collage of the collective issues. (Figure 7)

Meandering home in the twilight through the dwindling crowds, I thought back to the early 1970s, when Bob Staples and I were starting our design firm, Staples & Charles. Our first major project was *We the People* for the National Museum of American History, a 15,000 square foot Bicentennial exhibition funded by a \$500,000 congressional grant. The proposal concept was developed by Benjamin Lawless, Assistant Director for Design and Production, but given the scale of the project and other Bicentennial demands on the museum, we were hired to create the actual designs that would make ideas reality, working with Margaret Klaphor,

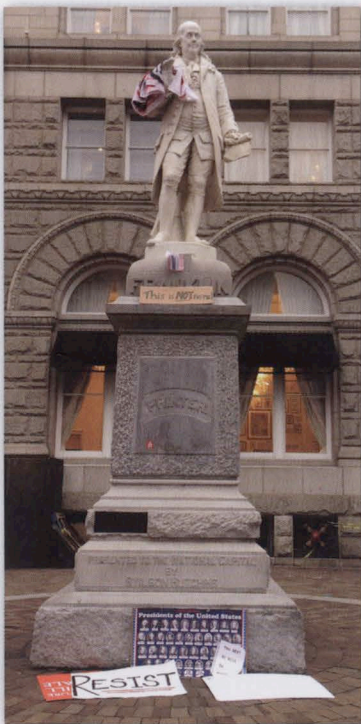


Figure 6.

Senior Curator in the Division of Political History, Curator Herbert Collins and Assistant Curator Edie Mayo.

Edie researched protests and women's history, so she was assigned the centerpiece of the exhibition—an assembly on the Capitol east steps of diverse people from suffragists to recent demonstrators, all petitioning for rights or redress of grievances. We began our design work in September 1973 and initially focused on the issues that the Capitol Steps concept presented. We all agreed that for the protestors we wanted photographs of actual people carrying actual protest ephemera from the museum's collections. The people would be black & white, offsetting the colorful banners and signs. We surveyed the collections and made a list of ideal candidates: suffragists, 1930s bonus march soldier, "I Am A Man" protester from the 1968 Memphis sanitation workers march, anti-draft, anti-Vietnam war, pro-civil rights, anti-busing, all in a range of ages and ethnic groups. To make it work, we needed clear photographs of whole figures with their hands and arms in positions to appear to be carrying a sign or banner. Not so easy. First, we searched public repositories, such as the National Archives and the Library of Congress; and then our own photographs. This effort yielded several good suffragists, a pair of demonstrators holding a large banner that Rick Steadry, the photographer who worked with us, had taken as a grad student at Harvard, two Native Americans that I had photographed when the Bureau of Indian Affairs was occupied (Figure 8), and one African American man stepping off a carousel—less than half of the number desired. Rick took on the assignment of going to protests and trying to capture the diversity and positions required. Timing was perfect. There were continuing demonstrations against the war in Vietnam and rallies calling for President Nixon's impeachment. Rick actually collected the "Brother can you spare a dime" box from a man selling apples, an allusion to the Depression, the closest we were able to achieve for a bonus marcher.

Bob's design for the Capitol Steps used forced



Figure 7.



Figure 8. Demonstrator at the AIM (American Indian Movement) occupation of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Washington DC, November 1972. Photograph by Barbara Fahs Charles.

perspective to create distance and scale to fit in the confines of the museum. Once we had Rick's perfect photograph of the Capitol, we started doctoring. The dome needed to be lowered if visitors were to see the crowning Statue of Freedom as they looked up into the tableau. We tried several versions in our model (Figure 9) and then created a large black and white print for the scenic artist to work from. A selection of transparencies provided colors and specific details. For the sagging flag at the top of the pediment, we found the perfect wave in our photo files. The limp Washington sky was replaced with beautiful clouds captured in Nebraska. The people also needed to be scaled from 5"-2" in the front to 4'-0" in the back. The artifacts, of course, could not be altered, so we selected smaller signs for figures closest to the Capitol.

Lastly, Edie Mayo and I worked on the quotes and slogans for the proscenium, searching for the right balance over time. The central

one was from the first Amendment to the Constitution: "the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances." The surrounding quotes ranged from "Taxation without representation is tyranny," attributed to James Otis, 1763, to the very current anti-draft "Hell No We Won't Go." We wanted to be confrontational, in the spirit of the rallies, but not so radical that someone from Congress would object.

Near to the Capitol Steps, an assembly of campaign banners and ballot boxes was surrounded by Bob Staples' *tour de force*, a 40-foot-long timeline of campaign memorabilia. (Figure 10)

Visitor response was very positive, especially for the campaign ephemera and the Capitol Steps. (Figure 11) *The Washington Post* reflected the consensus that "the most dramatic part of the exhibit is the "By the People" section, in which the rights to participate in government, to vote and petition government are the central themes.... What is most striking about this section however, is the contemporaneity of the right to petition portion—the panels depicting the causes of abolition, southern secession, black civil rights, farm worker appeals and Indian treaty rights, all issues that have burned brightly from the 19th century to the present day."<sup>2</sup> But one of the few complaints had some validity: "All protests exhibits in "We the People" were from the left. There have been ones on the right *i.e.* Pro-Life, Anti-busing, prayer etc. The presentation is undemocratic in nature."<sup>3</sup> This visitor had missed the anti-busing South Buffalo Parents Group NY "Save the Neighborhood School Concept" sign, but the museum's upper management had vetoed pro-life and pro-choice examples, as well as impeachment and amnesty, as too controversial for a congressionally-funded project.

Then, fifteen months after the show opened, Edie had to send a memorandum to Dr. Brooke Hindle, Director of the museum: "It has finally happened! Someone whose photograph was used (without permission) as a mannequin on the Capitol Steps has recognized herself — to her dismay"<sup>4</sup> Sarah B. Beach of New York had written

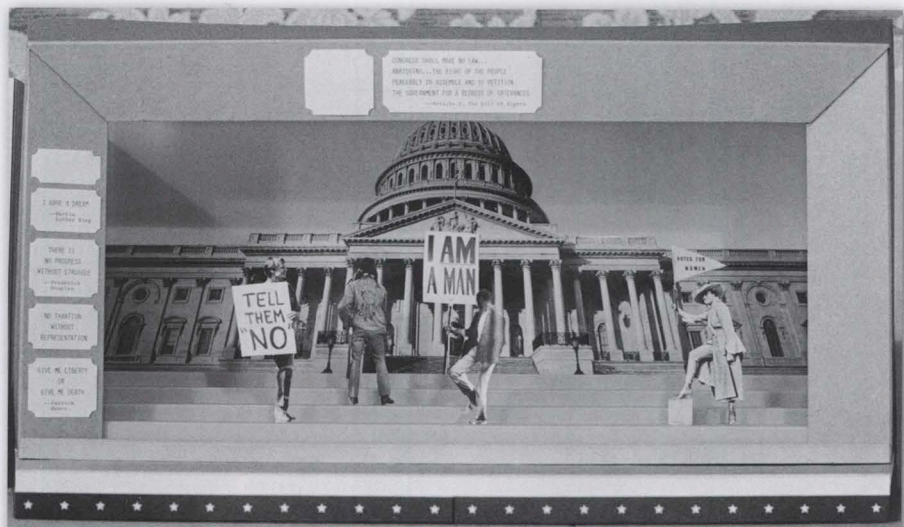


Figure 9. Staples & Charles model for the Capitol Steps, March 1974. Photograph by Rick Steadry/Staples & Charles.



Figure 10. Detail from the timeline of political ephemera in *We the People*, 1975. Photograph by Rick Steadry/Staples & Charles.

“To Whom It May Concern” that “Recently, in visiting the Bicentennial Exhibition at the Smithsonian Institute [sic], I was surprised to see a life-sized portrait of myself taken at an anti-war rally, holding a placard with an inscription reading, ‘War is not healthy for children and business!’ I would have been honored to have been immortalized by this esteemed institution, had my viewpoint not been completely distorted. Actually, I have never carried anyone else’s poster or placard and the one represented here is certainly not mine. My posters have always been pictorial, depicting the horrors in South East Asia. To declare that war is not healthy for children is at best, a cynical understatement, in view of such tragic events, as total destruction of a country as well as tremendous loss of lives of Americans. In addition, I take objection to the statement that war is not healthy for business—businesses traditionally are the greatest beneficiaries of wars.”<sup>5</sup>

Sarah Beach was hardly a casual protestor. Edie later learned that Mrs. Beach was a Polish immigrant and attended protest events almost every weekend. Her letter continued: “I should not wish to create the impression that I am a pacifist, which of course, the placard implies.

Philosophically, I am not opposed to all wars. For instance, I was in favor of the war dedicated to the destruction of fascism, an ideology which threatened the civilized world. I am in favor of all wars of liberation [sic], including war against poverty and oppression of liberty.”

No one wanted a legal problem. The easiest response would be to eliminate the offending mannequin and poster. But no one wanted to remove Sarah Beach from the Capitol Steps. She was our favorite figure. All of us were charmed by Rick’s photograph (Figure 12) and Mrs. Beach’s letter endeared her even more. A formidable, opinionated woman. Edie was tasked with winning her over. “We would very much like to keep your mannequin on our Capitol steps display, as we think it adds significantly to the exhibition and have had many compliments on it. So that we may not misrepresent your philosophical position, we would be happy to change the poster to one which you feel correctly conveys your feeling.... We have a sign from Women Strike for Peace which has their slogan ‘War Is Not Healthy for Children and Other Living things,’ which we could use to replace the present poster. If you feel that such a slogan would not do justice to your views, would you be kind enough to



Figure 11. The Capitol Steps in *We the People*, 1975. Photograph by Rick Steadry/Staples & Charles.

send us a poster which you have used at a demonstration, or let us know what type of poster you feel suitable?”<sup>6</sup>

Sarah Beach relented and accepted the proposed alternative. This change was made quickly so she could see it when she came to Washington in January 1977 during Jimmy Carter’s inauguration, at which time she also donated several of her own hand painted protest posters. (Figure 13)

The public enjoyed *We the People* without further complaints for the next ten years. The band of political ephemera survived even longer as part of a smaller exhibition celebrating the 200th anniversary of the U.S. Constitution. A new political hall that opened in 2016 includes an intense display of campaign ephemera, but no protestors on the Capitol Steps. Today it would be an anachronism. The Capitol Police no longer allow demonstrations on the Capitol grounds or on the steps of any congressional building. The exception is the Supreme Court, which has its own police force and sets its own rules.

**Endnotes**

- <sup>1</sup> Email from wmwlocalambassadors@gmail.com to volunteers, January 9, 2017.
- <sup>2</sup> Hollie I. West: “Historic Reflections: A Bicentennial Array In the American Spirit,” *The Washington Post*, June 4, 1975, B1.



Figure 12. Sarah Beach at a demonstration, Washington DC, 1973. Photograph by Rick Steady.



Figure 13. Sarah Beach standing next to her mannequin on the Capitol Steps, January 1977. Photograph from the Smithsonian Institution Archives, image #77-1211-05\_prt.

- <sup>3</sup> J. Stevens, Huntington Beach, CA: Museum Services Complaint Form, June 28, 1979. Smithsonian Institution Archives, Acc. 94-123, Box 2.
- <sup>4</sup> Edie Mayo: Draft memorandum to Dr. Brooke Hindle, September 24, 1976. Smithsonian Institution Archives, Acc. 94-123, Box 2.
- <sup>5</sup> Sarah B. Beach, New York, NY: To Whom It May Concern, Smithsonian Institution, August 13, 1976. Smithsonian Institution Archives, Acc. 94-123, Box 2.
- <sup>6</sup> Edie Mayo to Sarah Beach, October 18, 1976. Smithsonian Institution Archives, Acc. 94-123, Box 2.

**Barbara Fahs Charles,**

presently on our Board, has been a member of the Ephemera Society of America since the very beginning. In 1986, she and her partner Robert Staples were the first recipients of the Rickards Medal after Maurice himself. Their design firm, Staples & Charles, has contributed greatly to the acceptance of ephemera as prime artifacts for museum exhibitions.

