

Leland, Charles Godfrey, poetry scrapbook

Charles Godfrey Leland poetry scrapbook

1859

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Unit ID

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Unit Date

1859

Mixed Materials

2 (box)

Language

English

Creator

Leland, Charles Godfrey, 1824-1903

Extent

.2 Cubic Feet one half-width letter size document box bound volume of clippings of humorous poems compiled by Charles Godfrey Leland. The album contains over five hundred humorous poems, parodies, ballads, and epigrams by American authors extracted in the 1850's from American newspapers. These were systematically arranged and mounted on the leaves of a scrapbook, with annotations and manuscript caption titles by Leland, presumably for his enjoyment and possibly as a source for an anthology. The poems are arranged by subject according to Leland's determination or by the title of the poem. At least two poems are noted as Leland's. Also included are three pencil sketches of Leland (possibly self-portraits), two tipped in and one laid in. One of the sketches include an albumen print of Leland above the sketch.

Repository

Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library

Administrative Information

Conditions Governing Access

This collection is open for research.

Immediate Source of Acquisition

This collection was purchased from the Brick Row Bookshop by the Small Special Collections Library at the University of Virginia Library on October 13, 2020.

Preferred Citation

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Biographical / Historical

Charles Godfrey Leland, (1824-1903) was an American humorist, poet, and folklorist, born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He was educated at Princeton University and in Europe. He was born to Charles Leland, a commission merchant, and Charlotte Godfrey in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. His mother was a protegee of

Hannah Adams, the first American woman to write professionally. Leland believed he was descended from John Leland, among other illustrious antiquaries.

Leland claimed to have been influenced as a child by intellectual figures such as Lafayette and Nicolas Gouin Dufief. He recounted that shortly after his birth, his Dutch nurse took him to the family attic and performed a ritual involving a Bible, a key, a knife, lighted candles, money, and salt to ensure him a long life as "a scholar and a wizard." His biographers refer to this account as foreshadowing his interest in folk traditions and magic. The poet George Henry Boker was his neighbour in youth, and the two maintained a friendship through adulthood. George B. McClellan was a classmate.

After college, Leland went to Europe to continue his studies, first in Germany, at Heidelberg and Munich, and in 1848 at the Sorbonne in Paris, where he became involved with the Revolutions of 1848 in France, fighting at constructed barricades against the King's soldiers as a captain in the revolution. He became fascinated with German culture. On his return to America he studied and then practiced law. In 1853 he turned to journalism and worked for a number of years on Barnum's Illustrated News, the Philadelphia Evening Bulletin, Vanity Fair, and eventually took on editorial duties for Graham's Magazine, and the Philadelphia Press. In Graham's Magazine, he published the first of his German-English poems, "Hans Breitmann's Barty" (1857). Written in a mixture of German and broken English and first published in the 1860s and 1870s, the poems were later collected in *The Breitmann Ballads* (new ed., 1895). In 1856 Leland married Eliza Bella "Isabel" Fisher. They remained devoted to each other for 46 years until her death in 1902.

Leland published books and articles on American and European languages and folk traditions. He worked in a wide variety of trades, and achieved recognition for *Hans Breitmann's Ballads*. He wrote *Aradia, or the Gospel of the Witches*, which became a primary source text for Neopaganism, half a century later. He was best-known for reproducing the dialect and humour of the Philadelphia Germans (also called Pennsylvania Dutch). He pursued a variety of other interests, including Hermeticism, Neoplatonism, and the writings of Rabelais and Villon.

Leland was also an editor for the *Continental Monthly*, a pro-Union Army publication. He enlisted in the Union Army in 1863, and fought at the Battle of Gettysburg. Leland coined the term "emancipation" as an alternative to "abolition" to refer to the anti-slavery position.

Leland returned to Europe in 1869, and travelled widely, eventually settling in London. His fame during his lifetime rested chiefly on his comic *Hans Breitmann's Ballads* (1871), written in a combination of broken English and German (not to be confused, as it often has been, with Pennsylvania German). In recent times his writings on pagan and Aryan traditions have eclipsed the now largely forgotten Breitmann ballads, influencing the development of Wicca and modern paganism.

In his travels, he made a study of the Gypsies, on whom he wrote more than one book. Leland began to publish a number of books on ethnography, folklore and language. His writings on Algonquian and gypsy culture were part of the contemporary interest in pagan and Aryan traditions. Scholars have found Leland had taken significant liberties with his research. In his book *The Algonquin Legends of New England* Leland attempts to link Wabanki culture and history to the Norse. It has also come to light that Leland altered some of those folk tales in order to lend credence to his theory. He erroneously claimed to have discovered "the fifth Celtic tongue": the form of Cant, spoken among Irish Travellers, which he named Shelta. Leland became president of the English Gypsy Lore Society in 1888.

Eleven years later Godfrey produced *Aradia, or the Gospel of the Witches*, reportedly containing the traditional beliefs of Italian witchcraft as conveyed him in a manuscript provided by a woman named Maddalena, whom he refers to as his "witch informant." This remains his most influential book. *Aradia's* accuracy has been disputed,^[9] and used by others as a study of witch lore in 19th century Italy. Art education

Leland was also a pioneer of art and design education, becoming an important influence on the Arts and Crafts movement. In his memoirs he wrote, "The story of what is to me by far the most interesting period of my life remains to be written. This embraces an account of my labour for many years in introducing Industrial Art as a branch of education in schools."

He was involved in a series of books on industrial arts and crafts, including *Pyrography or burnt-wood etching* (1876), co-authored with Thomas Bolas (revised by Frank H Ball and G J Fowler in 1900). He was, more significantly, the founder and first director of the Public School of Industrial Art in Philadelphia (not to be confused with the contemporaneous Pennsylvania Museum and School of Industrial Art).^[11] This originated as a school to teach crafts to disadvantaged children and became widely known when it was praised by Oscar Wilde, who predicted his friend would be "recognised and honoured as one of the great pioneers and leaders of the art of the future." The Home Arts and Industries Association was founded in imitation of this initiative. Translations

Leland translated the collective works of the German Romanticist Heinrich Heine,^[14] and poems by Joseph Victor von Scheffel into English. He translated Eichendorff's novella *Aus dem Leben eines Taugenichts* to English as *Memoirs of a Good-for-Nothing*, published in New York in 1866 by Leypohl & Holt.^[16]

After inheriting his father's estate in 1869, Leland abandoned journalism, preferring to pursue his interest in

folklore, mysticism, and the occult. He lived mostly in Italy and Germany after 1884. In 1888, Leland moved to Florence, Italy, where he lived out the remainder of his life. It was here that he met Maddalena Taleni (or possibly Zaleni), whom he always referred to as just Maddalena, or as his witch informant. She was a card reader, telling fortunes in the back streets of Florence, but Leland soon discovered that Maddalena was also a practicing witch, and employed her (and another woman, named Marietta, who Maddalena introduced to Leland) to help gather material for his research on Stregheria (or Italian witchcraft). Certain passages in his books strongly suggest that Leland was himself initiated into Stregheria.

Sources: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Godfrey_Leland
<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Charles-Godfrey-Leland>
http://www.lukemastin.com/witchcraft/witches_leland.html

Keywords

poetry

witchcraft, folklore, and mythology