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Surprise Sketches

Arthur Mitchell Fraas

University of Pennsylvania, fraas@upenn.edu

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Surprise Sketches

Abstract

Contextual essay about a copy of Francis Grund, *Die Aristokratie in Amerika, aus dem Tagebuch eines deutschen Edlemanns* (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1839) held by the Penn Libraries which features hand-drawings in the place of engravings of several key figures.

Keywords

Book History, Portraits

Disciplines

History

Comments

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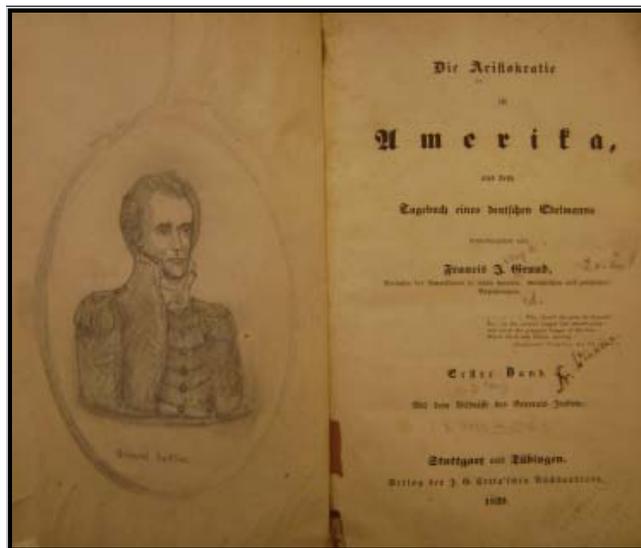
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Today's post again turns from the treasures in our special collections stacks to our general collections to provide a glimpse at a unique volume. As with the annotated Mussolini [book](#) from a few weeks ago, this item is not unique in the sense that it is the only known copy of a text but rather for what it reveals about a long history of use and reading.



- Title page of Francis Grund, *Die Aristokratie in Amerika, aus dem Tagebuch eines deutschen Edelmanns* (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1839). [University of Pennsylvania copy](#).

The particular book pictured above is Francis Grund's *Die Aristokratie in Amerika* published in 1839 in Stuttgart and the same year in English as *Aristocracy in America* [1]. Grund was a German-American journalist and author who lived in Philadelphia for much of his life [2]. Unlike Alexis de Tocqueville's famous *Democracy in America* (1835-40), Grund's similar work of observations, anecdotes, and reflections on American life is largely forgotten today.

WELCOME

Welcome to Unique at Penn, part of the family of University of Pennsylvania Libraries blogs. Every week this space will feature descriptions and contextualization of items from the collections of the University of Pennsylvania Libraries. The site focuses on those materials held by Penn which are in some sense "unique" - drawn from both our special and circulating collections, whether a one-of-a-kind medieval manuscript or a twentieth-century popular novel with generations of student notes penciled inside.

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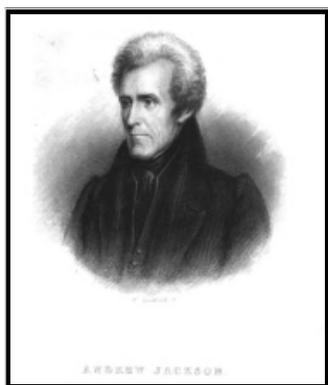
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Nonetheless, copies in English and German of Grund's work abound in libraries across the US and Europe. In fact the ubiquity of the text is what makes the Penn copy all the more interesting.

When Grund's book came out in London and Stuttgart it contained several engravings of American political figures featured within. Among these was a featured portrait of president Andrew Jackson. In fact, the German edition of the book even proclaimed on its title page *Mit dem Bildnisse des Generals Jackson* ("With the portrait of General Jackson"). If you look at the title page spread above you can see quite clearly the portrait of Andrew Jackson in Penn's copy – most readers will notice that there seems to be something a bit odd about it.

What makes the portrait in the Penn copy intriguing and unique is that it is nothing like the original engraving included with the book. Both the London and Stuttgart editions featured original engravings by the London artist **William Greatbach**:



– Engraving of Andrew Jackson by William Greatbach as included in *Die Aristokratie in Amerika* (Stuttgart, 1839). From the **Princeton University copy**.



– Pencil sketch of Andrew Jackson from from *Die Aristokratie in Amerika* (Stuttgart, 1839). **University of Pennsylvania copy**

The portrait appearing in Penn's copy is, as you can see drawn in pencil where the missing engraving would have gone. When Penn bought this copy in 1914 from Germany the pencil portrait was already present, drawn by some prior owner [3].

It was clearly not traced from the original and was likely taken from another print of Jackson circulating in Germany [4]. The anonymous 19th c. owner clearly wanted to complete his/her copy and also went ahead and added an additional pencil sketch of Martin Van Buren where another Greatbach engraving should have been:

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☐ **AUTHORS**

adminuatpa

Alexander Devine

Dianne Mitchell

Jacqueline Burek

Regan Kladstrup

Marissa Nicosia

Mitch Fraas

Michael P. Williams

Richard Griscom

Nancy Shawcross

Pushkar Sohoni

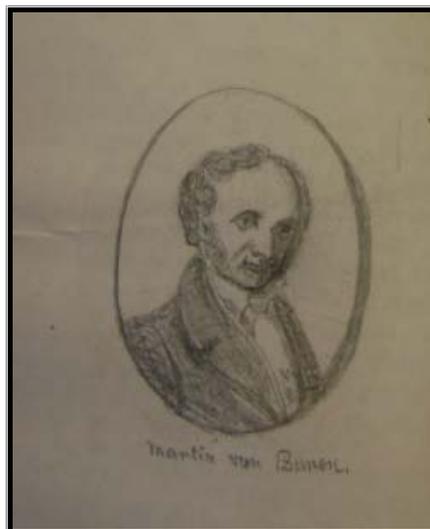
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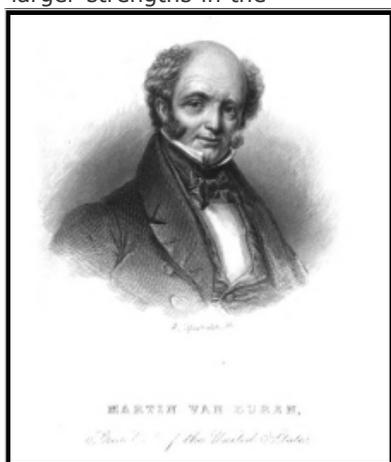
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- If John Mauchly was a

Publishers would often put out two versions of books like Grund's including a less expensive edition without plates, but it's not clear if that is the case in this instance. Regardless, the owner of this volume seems to have felt that illustration was necessary for a truly complete reading experiences. In this case a rollicking anecdotal journey through Jacksonian America written by a fellow German [5]. Penn's collections are full of these kinds of unique items, well suited to the university's larger strengths in the



— Pencil sketch of Van Buren from *Die Aristokratie in Amerika* (Stuttgart, 1839). Now less bald. [University of Pennsylvania copy.](#)



— Engraving of Martin Van Buren by William Greatbach from *Die Aristokratie in Amerika* (Stuttgart, 1839) [Princeton University copy](#)

history of material texts and the study of the [early American republic](#).

[1] The Stuttgart edition bears an author's forward dated June 1839; the London publisher Richard Bentley put out an edition in English nearly simultaneously with an author's forward dated 10 May, 1839, see [Aristocracy in America. From the sketch-book of a German nobleman](#) (London: R. Bentley, 1839). It did not appear in an American edition until the 20th century.

[2] Francis J. Grund (1805-1863) wrote extensively for the German and English press in Philadelphia and was heavily involved in politicking for various political parties within the German-American community. Penn has extensive holdings in German-Americana including a large digitized collection [here](#). For more on Grund see James M. Bergquist. "Grund, Francis Joseph" in the *American National Biography Online* <<http://www.anb.org/articles/16/16-00667.html>>; as well as Holman Hamilton and James L.

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Courthamel, "A Man for Both Parties: Francis J. Grund as a Political Chameleon". *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 97.4 (1973), pp. 465–484.

[3] Annotations inside the cover indicate it arrived at Penn in 1914, possibly from the Leipzig bookseller Volckmer. The bookplate states that it was purchased with funds provided by the [George Lieb Harrison Foundation](#). This bookplate was pasted over a note referencing the presence of the pencil portraits.

[4] I am unable to track down the exact print (any enterprising art historians?) but the posture and high-collar indicates some derivative of Nathan Wheeler's famous [portrait](#) or perhaps this 1830s [French engraving](#).

[5] Both the [German](#) and [English](#) text of the 1839 edition are available online through the Hathi trust. A contemporary edition with scholarly introduction is available for checkout [at Penn](#).

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About Mitch Fraas

[Mitch Fraas](#) is the Scholar in Residence at the Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts at the University of Pennsylvania Libraries. He is also the interim director of the Penn digital humanities forum. At Penn, Mitch works on a variety of projects cutting across general and special collections, with a special focus on digital humanities. He holds doctoral and master's degrees in history from Duke University and earned his bachelor's degree at Boston College. His doctoral dissertation examined the legal culture of British India in the 17th and 18th centuries, arguing for the existence of a unified early modern British imperial legal culture whether in Philadelphia, Bombay, or London.

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