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The “Althea Hurst Scrapbook”. Discovering the Photographic Memories of Four African American Teachers’ European Tour in 1938

Chiara Salari

- 1 In the summer of 1938, four African American teachers from Cincinnati decided to tour Europe, on their own, by steamship and train. The travel route took the women first to Canada, then aboard a transatlantic ship to England, Holland, Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Austria, Italy, Switzerland, and France. Back home in Avondale, Cincinnati, Althea Hurst created a scrapbook from the snapshot photographs she took, integrating the many postcards, tourist brochures, guidebooks, menus, transport timetables, maps, commercial and artworks illustrations she collected, all accompanied by itinerary and correspondence, detailed captions, and personal annotations. Having no children, Hurst left the scrapbook to family friend Dr. Houston Brummit, who preserved it when she and her husband both died in 1988. A retired psychiatrist in New York City, Brummit donated the scrapbook to the Public Library of Cincinnati in 2015, so that the four teachers’ travel experience could be shared with a larger public. Some pages of the “Althea Hurst Scrapbook” were on display through the month of February 2016 in the Cincinnati Main Library’s second and third floor elevator cases and at the Walnut Hills Branch Library. Moreover, the entire object with all its components has been digitized and can be viewed online.¹
- 2 Created at a particular socio-political moment—that saw the segregation and discrimination of African Americans in the United States as well as the rise of militarization in the context of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy in Europe—this scrapbook provides a minority point of view, that of a middle-class African American woman and her colleagues. Hurst and Margaret Duncan were teachers at Jackson School, Laura Knight was their assistant principal, and Martha Bush taught at Sherman School. Those two schools, located in Cincinnati’s West End, were attended by black

children and allowed black educators to teach, which they were not allowed to at the city's white public schools. Indeed, Jim Crow laws—state and local legislation in place since the *Plessy v. Ferguson* Supreme Court ruling of 1896 and de facto segregating public space—were still effective in the late 1930s. Separate coach laws were some of the first laws to appear, beginning in Tennessee in the 1880s. Soon thereafter, schools, stores, theaters, restaurants, bathrooms, and nearly all other public facilities were segregated. So too were social lives. For instance, marriage laws regulated against interracial couples. In politics, de facto limitations on voting had suppressed the black vote since Reconstruction, as whites stuffed ballot boxes and intimidated black voters, both physically and economically. Jim Crow laws legalized what custom had long dictated (Locke and Wright 68).

- 3 The turn of the 20th century nonetheless saw the emergence of a black middle class, including teachers, doctors, businessmen. Oftentimes, they themselves or their elders were descendants of “favored slaves” who had worked in the house, not in the field. This aspiring group was progressively able to pursue a middle-class lifestyle, notably going on vacation. Yet, Jim Crow laws made no exception for “uppity” colored people, who met segregation on the road. As a consequence, black magazines circulated advertisements that suggested motels, inns and gas stations which would accept guests regardless of their skin color. Often, such books provided addresses of businesses mostly run by and for African Americans, thus stimulating black consumption and the growth of a black middle class. The *Negro Motorist Green Book* (1936-1966), the longest-running of such guidebooks, was particularly important, as it expanded its contents each decade, turning from a local guide into one spanning the globe. The author, Victor Hugo Green, probably drew inspiration from travel guides for Jewish travelers in the 1930s, in order to create a version specifically made for black people navigating the Jim Crow US.² Middle-class African Americans were also being targeted by ambitious travel companies hoping to expand their business. These agencies proposed packaged tours abroad, where black travelers often sought at least temporary relief from the suffocating racism affecting the United States (Foster 131-132).
- 4 African American women proved that they could also travel by themselves: that is the case, for example, with the Mississippian Juanita Harrison. After a condensed version of her story appeared in the fall 1935 issue of the *Atlantic Monthly*, she extensively described her adventures in the autobiography *My Great, Wide, Beautiful World* (1936). As Mildred Morris (the daughter of her first employer in France) explains in the preface to the book, Harrison did not receive much schooling, but she “lived with a bright vision of templed cities in foreign lands which she had seen pictured in the stray pages of a magazine” (Harrison ix). Beginning very early “an endless round of cooking, washing, ironing in an overburdened household” (the norm for young African Americans at the time), she then attended classes at the YWCA (Young Women’s Christian Association) and night school, also taking up the study of Spanish and French. From the time she started out to work her way around the world, between June 1927 and April 1935, until settling down on the Island of Hawaii, Harrison had lived in 22 countries³, often staying in YWCA hostels, and moving as she found employment. She wrote:

“[...] I need very little for myself I just want to be in the midst of it. I have reversed the saying of Troubles are like Babies the more you nurse them the bigger They grow so I have nursed the joys” (Harrison 318).
- 5 Perhaps inspired by Harrison’s elaborate journeys, Hurst and her colleagues’ shorter transatlantic trip in the summer of 1938 was organized by Provident Travel Service.

Indeed, the inside front cover of the "Althea Hurst Scrapbook" contains 13 pages of correspondence from the travel agency. Mentioning previous discussions with the African American costumers in order to plan their journey, a letter dated 16 April 1938 notably indicates the schedule and rail fares between Cincinnati and Quebec, from where the ocean liner "Empress of Britain" would leave for Europe. The first page of the album then presents the "Final Itinerary" (dated 20 June 1938), elaborated over 15 consecutive pages, preceded by the handwritten title "1938 Canadian and European Travel July-Aug. 26," and the following note:

Travel gives authoritative knowledge of strange lands and peoples whose past and present cultures one desires to understand. A carefully planned itinerary allows sufficient time to enjoy and absorb impressions. A valuable disposition is made of each day and hour of travel. Travel is an investment paying lifetime dividends in rich memories (Hurst 1).

- 6 The scrapbook shows pictures of the four African American women on luxury liners, staying in elegant hotels and discovering fine dining places. "It was sort of comparable to the experience African American GIs had when they went to France and discovered far more rights than they had in the US," said Patricia Van Skaik, manager of the Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County's Genealogy & Local History Collection, where the scrapbook is conserved. Provident Travel Service booked accommodations aboard ships, trains and in hotels that would not have been available to black people in the 1930s, due to racial segregation. Nevertheless, by the time of the teachers' travels, Germany was already under the Nazi and anti-Semitic leadership of Adolph Hitler, and Italy was ruled by the Fascist dictator Benito Mussolini. Did the four African American women face discrimination? There is no explicit trace of this in the scrapbook. Perhaps Hurst was hoping, in creating this object, to further facilitate travel initiatives by African American individuals, despite the tense context both at home and abroad. As the introduction to the online collection states:

The purpose of this trip was to give authenticity to what they had read and compare their findings to information provided in text books as a way to inspire African American children to travel and broaden their world view ("Althea Hurst Scrapbook—Digital Library").

- 7 This article takes the "Althea Hurst Scrapbook" as a case study, relating it both to the broader practice of travel-album-making and to the collection of travel photographs. A heavy and dense object—38 x 31 cm in size and made of 2 cases and a total of 91 pages—this scrapbook comprises about 320 pictures.⁴ Its main photographic elements—postcards and snapshots—are often labeled as "everyday" or "vernacular" photography by scholars (Batchen, Chéroux, Cutshaw et al., Herman). Increasingly, however, they are also reevaluated as important sources for understanding society and history "from below", namely from a popular and local perspective (Berger, Edwards, Greenough, Langford). In the context of their exhibition in a public library—where they are not detached or isolated from their material support—these photographs are appreciated more for their socio-historical significance than for their aesthetic value, usually emphasized by art museums. The digital availability of and access to the "Althea Hurst Scrapbook" also participates in restoring visibility to photographic memories from the margins—through a minority perspective, that of an African American woman—thus contributing to a growing field of photo-historical scholarship concentrating on hitherto marginalized figures and practices (Di Bello, Ballesta and de Larminat, Görden, Batchen).

- 8 This case study can therefore be associated to recent projects of preservation and digitization of African American albums and scrapbooks, like "The Arabella Chapman Project," the Emory University Libraries "Save America's Treasures Grant Project" (Frellsen, Norman and Methot), or the collection of "Negroana" scrapbooks of L. S. Alexander Gumby (Gilger). At the same time, it may be placed within a broader discussion on photograph albums (Langford; Curtis), particularly addressing the US-American context (Siegel; Levine and Snyder; G6rger), or women's productions (Di Bello), as well as photo-books more generally (Parr and Badger; Paul Edwards; Brunet 2009) and travel photography and albums more specifically (Osborne; Schwartz and Ryan; Levine and Jensen). A striking example of a particular social itinerary, the "Althea Hurst Scrapbook"'s travel narrative may also be put in perspective with the cultural practice of the Grand Tour, as an earlier cosmopolitan tradition that was "democratized" along with other cultural and social practices, like that of collecting and then producing photographs. In order to relate our case study to this broader scholarly context, we will first focus on the album's elements which express the socio-historical dimension of the African American teachers' journey, including allusions to the rise of Nazism and anti-Semitism, as well as Hurst's later correspondence with a friend in Budapest. An analysis of the scrapbook's semi-public and hybrid nature will follow.

The album of four African American women traveling in 1938 Europe

- 9 The journey of Hurst, Duncan, Knight, and Bush begins in Quebec, Canada, to which four pages are devoted. Amongst the numerous magazine clippings, illustrations, menus and tourist information brochures, we see a photograph of the four women aboard the transatlantic ocean liner "Empress of Britain" (Fig. 1). A small image with the inscription "after the party" on the left, a dining room plan of the ocean liner accompanied by the annotation "our table", and a cabin image whose handwritten note indicates "our cabin going over" serve to inscribe the travelers' presence in the pictures and to personalize their experience from the start.

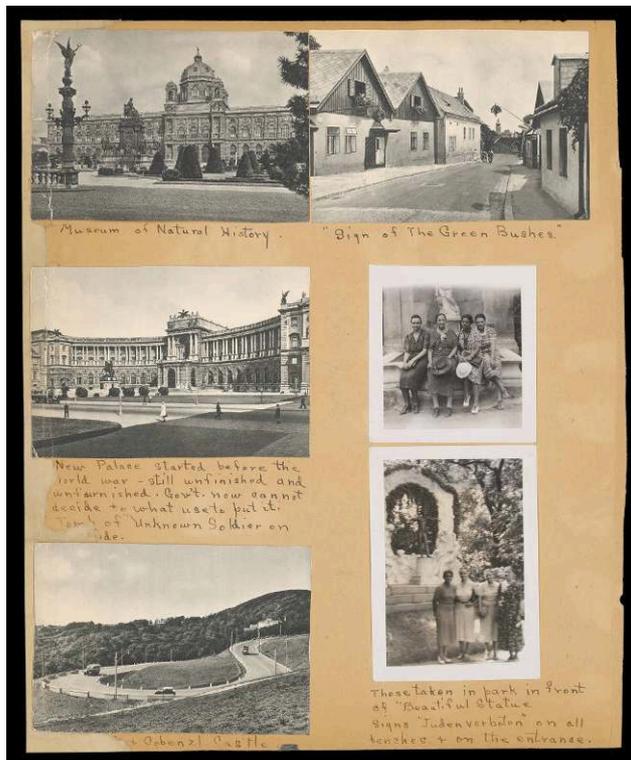
Figure 1



Althea Hurst scrapbook, 1938. Page 06, 38 x 31 cm, Cincinnati & Hamilton County Public Library. Genealogy & Local History Department

- 10 Intended to both document a personal journey (private “impressions” and “memories”) and to compare information provided in text books to actual places (in order to encourage African American students to travel), the album then follows the teachers’ travel chronologically, showing images and objects collected in England, Holland, Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Austria, Italy, Switzerland, and France. References to the socio-political situation at the time can be found on the pages consecrated to Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Austria. For instance, Nurnberg’s pictures are accompanied by detailed captions: while some indicate the market hours and the location of the train station, a photograph is described as “Five cornered tower built in 1494 by Hans Beheim (Sr.) for storing corn. Later used for stables. Torture tower. Now used for Youth’s barracks.” A page consecrated to Berlin shows three color postcards (of Alexander Square, the Brandenburg Gate, and the “Broadcasting Station”) but also three photographs portraying the women with Mr. Strivser, whom Hurst specifies is their Jewish guide (Fig. 2). According to their travel itinerary, the teachers stayed in Germany from July 20 to July 28, 1938. Nazi leaders would release a series of pogroms against the Jewish population in Germany and recently incorporated territories on November 9–10 of that same year. This event came to be called the November pogrom or *Kristallnacht* (The Night of Broken Glass) because of the shattered glass that littered the streets after the vandalism and destruction of Jewish-owned businesses, synagogues, and homes.⁵ The fact that Hurst felt the need to specify their guide was Jewish lets us presume she learned about the pogroms once she was back in the US and assembled the album, as the accounts of the event from foreign journalists working in Germany drew worldwide attention.⁶

Figure 2



Althea Hurst scrapbook, 1938. Page 38, 38 x 31 cm, Cincinnati & Hamilton County Public Library. Genealogy & Local History Department

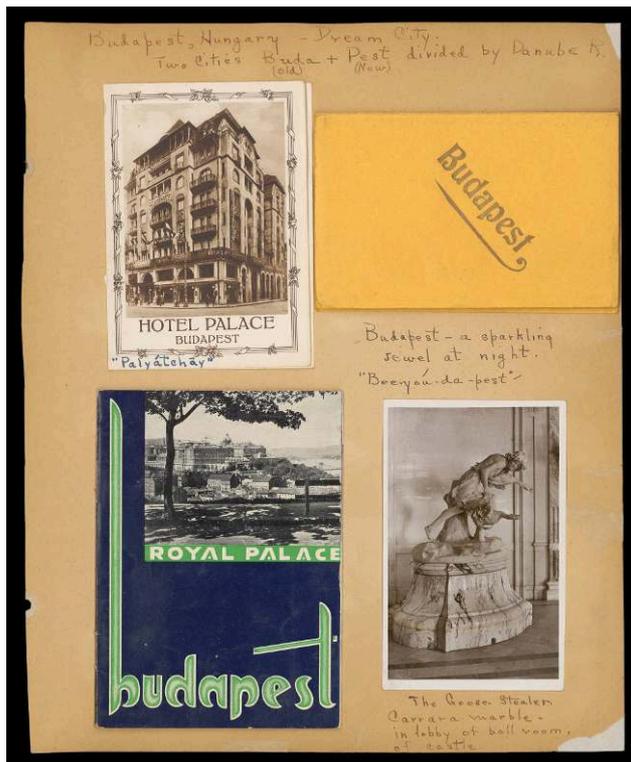
- 11 This would also explain why Hurst consecrated an entire page to “The old-new Jewish Synagogue” in Prague, presenting three series of small format photographs with precise captions. The next page gathers much historic detail in written observations around pictures of the astronomical clock and the Powder gate (“built 1468. Palace adjoining now a concert hall”), as well as of the Hradčany Castle and the castle grounds. Here the African American teacher specified:

Tower room overlooking moat from which 25 Bohemian noblemen threw Austrian sympathizer. Later when Austrians were victorious in capturing Bohemia, these 25 were thrown into moat. Hitler’s headquarters after the Anschluss of Czechoslovakia (Hurst).

- 12 As with the photograph of their Jewish guide in Berlin, Hurst probably felt the need to add this particular image and information while assembling the scrapbook back home, since the annexation of Czechoslovakia to Nazi Germany started after their trip. In the section dedicated to Vienna, amongst the many black and white pictures (postcards and small format images) documenting the city’s squares, views and monuments, several snapshots capture the four teachers. More specifically, on the page titled “Schonbrunn Palace Grounds. Kaiser’s summer home,” they are shown in the palace park and on the palace steps, while the written annotation for the two portraits in the figure below explains: “these taken in front of ‘beautiful statue’, signs ‘Juden verboten (Jews forbidden) on all benches + on the entrance” (Fig. 3). Such forms of explicit segregation of urban space with signs could probably have looked familiar to the African American women, having experienced racialized policing of space in the Jim Crow US. Indeed, based on the legal principle (and constitutional fallacy) of “separate

but equal", racial segregation inscribed the superiority of whites and the deference of blacks into the very geography of public spaces (Locke and Wright 131).

Figure 3



Althea Hurst scrapbook, 1938. Page 52, 38 x 31 cm, Cincinnati & Hamilton County Public Library. Genealogy & Local History Department

- 13 As we have seen, Hurst included in her album “eyewitness to history” pictures and legends, particularly addressing, with the last comment we mentioned, the growing anti-Semitism in the territories annexed to Germany. In addition, the scrapbook’s last pages also contain some postcards the African American teacher received (from France and from Florence, for instance), a few holiday cards and some correspondence, revealing more explicitly the historic context. By the time the four Cincinnati women decided to travel, Germany had already invaded and annexed Austria and was threatening other countries, especially Czechoslovakia which would be occupied the next year. On October 10, 1939, a woman named Mizzi Klammer sent Hurst a letter from Budapest recalling the 1938 trip. In it, Klammer—whose first language appears to be German and who has friends in Vienna—worries about the threat of war and tells of her opposition to it, while also expressing relief that Hungary remained neutral⁷. She writes:

Everybody is worried about one’s own fate: nobody knows whether it will not be necessary to leave home and country already the next day. [...] And yet we have no reason for complaints, we are living in a neutral country and know the horrors of war only by hearsay (Hurst 89).

- 14 Klammer also refers to Hurst’s situation, and concludes by sending her regards to Mrs. Bush and Mrs. Knight:

Although you were not able to come to Europe, I suppose you had a good time also at home. Having the possibility of doing all kinds of sports, you surely spent an

agreeable and amusing holiday, [...] School will have started by now and you will be very busy again. If teaching European Geography, you will have to adapt yourself to the new situation. There is hardly a fixed point in Europe nowadays, everything is shifting and moving. Frontiers disappear over night and nothing seems impossible (Hurst 89).

- 15 A shorter letter written in March 1947 describes the changing reality. Klamer mentions a visit of her brother from New York: "the more we hear of the life over there, the more we want to go there, where we could find a free and really easy life" (Hurst 89). She then tells the African American teacher of the hell she went through while reassuring her friend that her family has survived:

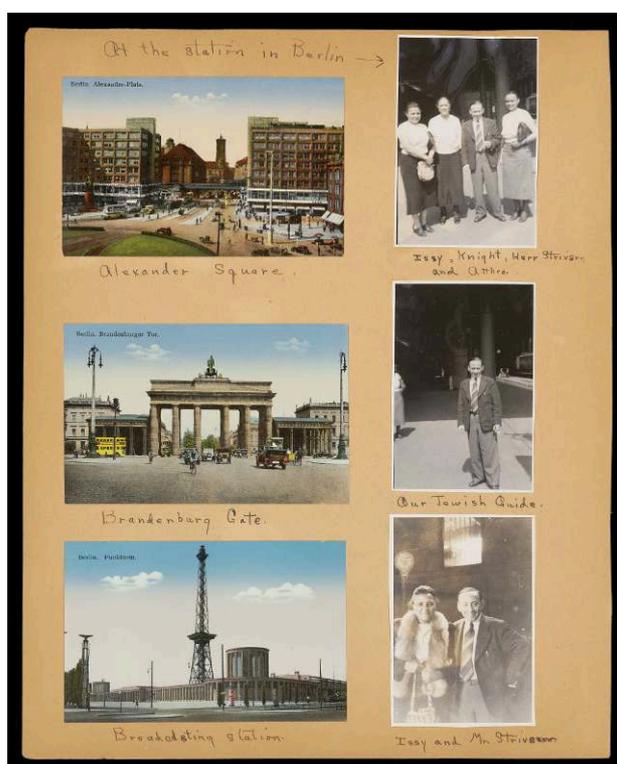
[W]hen we remember, what we survived here, we ask ourselves terrified, if it was true, that we could endure all this? [...] It was not easy to survive these difficult times, we suffered much. Our shop has been robbed, our flat too, and we had to begin a new life (Hurst 89).

- 16 Klamer ends her letter wishing to hear more from Hurst and what she did during the time they could not correspond.
- 17 The "Althea Hurst Scrapbook" reconstructs the African American teachers' journey through images, texts and other materials (such as letters received after the trip), constituting both a personal object and a historical document, as the album was intended from the beginning to be shown in classrooms. In *Suspended Conversations: The Afterlife of Memory in Photograph Albums*, Martha Langford concentrates on the "idea" of album as a paradigm for a "space of public encounter", which creates social memory. Affirming that "the showing and telling of an album is a performance" (Langford 5), she highlights the performative and retrospective aspect of the photographic album, seen as an act of communication whose roots are in orality. Among the four categories of personal compilation she identifies (collections, memoirs, travelogues, genealogies), the travelogue expresses most aptly the intersections between social influence and individual experience that characterize photographic albums. The journey experience is recreated at the end of the trip, when the album is usually assembled or completed. This is the case of the "Althea Hurst Scrapbook," including pictures bought or made during the travel as well as later annotations and correspondence, personal memories and references to the socio-political situation of the countries traversed.

Documenting the teachers' Grand Tour and collecting photographic memories

- 18 Having presented the historical context of the African American women's trip and the album's elements which shed a new light on the tense political climate both at home and abroad, the second part of this article analyzes more specifically the scrapbook's layout. We will therefore focus on the interplay of images and texts, as well as on the intertwinement between personal and tourist experiences. The "Althea Hurst Scrapbook" is indeed a hybrid object, primarily because of its multiple components—written annotations emphasizing the material features of pictures, photographic or graphic elements—but also because of its both private and educational nature. Images and texts serve alternatively to explain and to personalize a collection of travel memories.

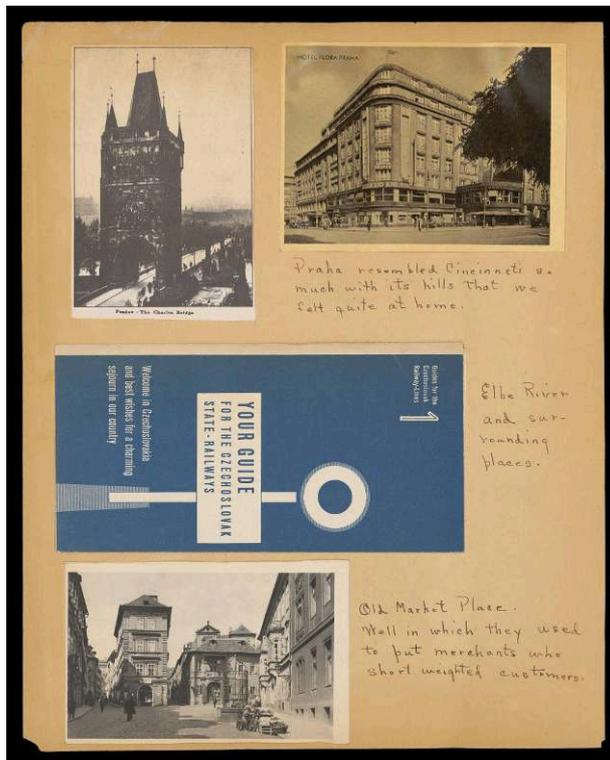
Figure 4



Althea Hurst scrapbook, 1938. Page 13, 38 x 31 cm, Cincinnati & Hamilton County Public Library. Genealogy & Local History Department

- 19 For example, on this page dedicated to the "Sightseeing in and around London," showing a series of small format photographs of black and white views of the river Avon and of the "Guy's Cliffe Mill" near Warwick, the caption indicates "mill 1,000 years old. Still grinding every day" (Fig. 4). Information on the present situation of ancient sites is also provided on the following page, where the title "Warwick Castle. Family still lives there" introduces a series of illustrations of the castle interiors and grounds, as well as some snapshots of exterior views, including a portrait of the women in the "Warwick yard." As with the section consecrated to London and Stratford-on-Avon (displaying several color postcards of Shakespeare-related locations, a map, a ticket to "Anne Hathaway's cottage" and snapshots of Hurst's travel companions), personal photographs also alternate with commercially produced pictures and objects (train tickets, tourist guides, and magazine clippings) in the section dedicated to "Holland—Land and Water. Modern and Old" (Fig. 5). In particular, a series of snapshots document the teachers' trip to Marken Island, which then reserves four pages for photographs and illustrations representing typical houses, people and traditions, therefore merging personal photographic memories and more classical documentation.

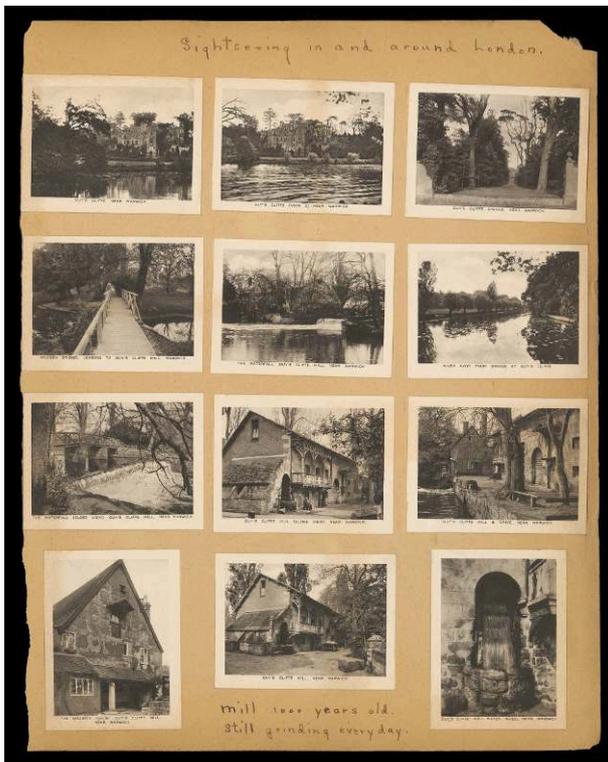
Figure 5



Althea Hurst scrapbook, 1938. Page 21, 38 x 31 cm, Cincinnati & Hamilton County Public Library. Genealogy & Local History Department

- 20 The title “Praha—Czechoslovakia” is followed by the words “America its ideal,” and on the next page Hurst wrote “Praha resembled Cincinnati so much with its hills that we felt quite at home,” inscribing this comment below the image of the “Hotel Flora” above the Czechoslovak railway guide and a photograph of the Old Market Place (Fig. 6). This comparison to the United States is also drawn when we move “Out in the villages around Budapest.” Here, amongst the different annotations accompanying sets of photographs and postcards of peasant life and traditional activities (for example “Pretty women, houses white with long end to street, no grass in fenced yards. Geese everywhere” and “Each village has its distinctive costume”), we find the interesting comment “On the plains. Like our ranches.” Through this comparison, which reveals the travelers’ geographical origins, the “Althea Hurst Scrapbook” seems to exacerbate what Langford calls “the semi-public nature of the traveler’s album, its veneer of objective reportage” (Langford 65), similar to that of an illustrated lecture or a descriptive film. Considered as a narrative device, the travel album presents an itinerary which implies a return back home (Langford 81). This album reconstructs a map of the journey, whose itinerary was carefully planned, providing objective information and personal impressions, but also the travelers’ origins and cultural perspectives.

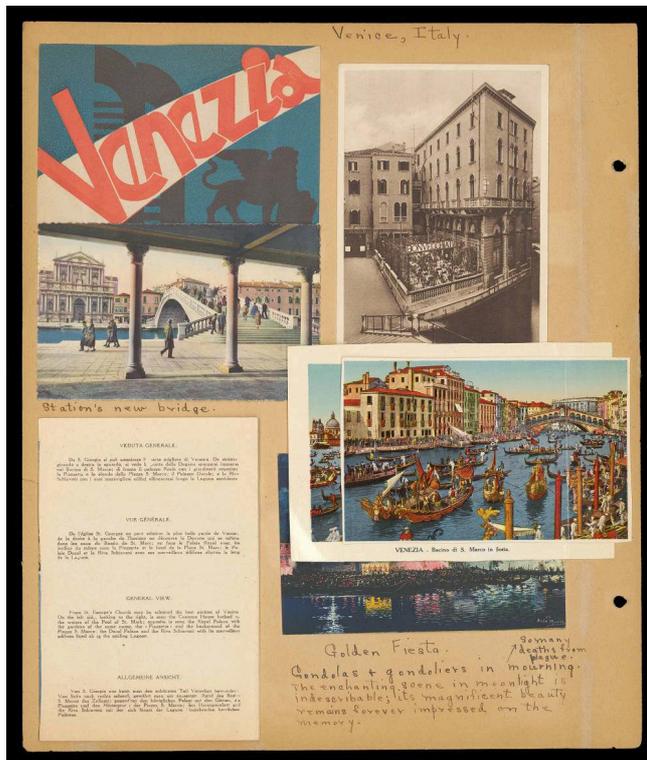
Figure 6



Althea Hurst scrapbook, 1938. Page 40, 38 x 31 cm, Cincinnati & Hamilton County Public Library. Genealogy & Local History Department

- 21 The section devoted to Italy opens with a brochure titled "Venezia," partly hidden by a color image with the caption "Station's new bridge" at the bottom of which we see a description in four languages of the "general view" we can admire from the St. George's Church (Fig. 7). Some other typical views of Venice are presented through postcards or ancient photographs on the right side of this page, three of which are superimposed and accompanied by the description:
- Golden Fiesta. Gondolas + gondoliers in mourning (so many deaths from plague).
The enchanting scene in moonlight is indescribable; its magnificent beauty remains forever impressed on the memory.
- 22 This collage of heterogeneous elements is followed by several pages presenting the squares, canals, and monuments of Venice through a more classic layout: 4 to 6 photographs per page are accompanied by the titles "St. Mark's Cathedral, Square and Surroundings" and "Venice—Here and There—Side Canals." Here too, precise information about the past and present of specific locations and monuments (for example "Rialto Bridge - first to span Grand Canal. Has 12 stores or shops in it") coexists with more personal details, for instance in the caption "Station. Imagine you and baggage gliding to or from station. It was a thrill!"

Figure 7



Althea Hurst scrapbook, 1938. Page 56, 38 x 31 cm, Cincinnati & Hamilton County Public Library. Genealogy & Local History Department

- 23 While “Milano, Italy—The Metropolis” is presented in a map of the city center, a picture with the caption “Hotel Andreola where we had lunch on sidewalk café” and five photographic reproductions (the captions indicating “last supper by Leonardo da Vinci,” “Pace Arch,” “Victor Emanuel Arcade. Largest in the world—4 arcades converge at this point. Mosaic floor,” “Central Station,” “Piazza of Duomo and”⁸), on the first page consecrated to France we find the title: “Paris, France. Land of beauty and charm. France, land of letters, science, festivals + gaiety.” A map of “Paris et sa banlieue par le metro” is included, as well as a postcard of the Arc de Triomphe—with an arrow indicating the “Speldido Hotel” on the right side of the picture—and a photograph of a “taxi de la Marne” kept at the “Musée de l’armée” (Fig. 8). Apparently, Hurst and her companions won at the horse race, as suggested by the title “Deauville to the Race + won!” at the top of a page collecting the women’s tickets to the Deauville horse race, as well as sets of photographs and postcards. All these handwritten elements serve to inscribe the teachers’ experience in the travel narrative, showing the appropriation and personalization of commercially produced images and objects.

Figure 8



Althea Hurst scrapbook, 1938. Page 68, 38 x 31 cm, Cincinnati & Hamilton County Public Library. Genealogy & Local History Department

- 24 The last part of the album also gathers the “blue and red itinerary books” provided by Provident Travel Service. Specifying that “[t]his itinerary has been especially prepared for Mrs. Althea Hurst, Cincinnati, Ohio”, these folders (of 38 and 58 pages respectively) present rich information, as well as images and maps, of the places included in the trip. We can suppose that Hurst used them as guide-books, transcribing and integrating some descriptions in her album. As we have seen, this hybrid object presents both a personal travel narrative and a detailed visual documentation of the four teachers’ journey. This follows the double intention of their trip, namely to collect impressions and memories, as well as to give authenticity to information contained in textbooks through their personal experience, in order to encourage African American students to travel. Words serve alternatively to explain or to appropriate the images. While the titles of the geographically oriented sections often express tourist assumptions, short annotations or signs like arrows inscribe the four women’s presence and experiences. Snapshots portraying the teachers in front of monuments or landscapes also help to personalize the journey and to update the representation of the visited places.

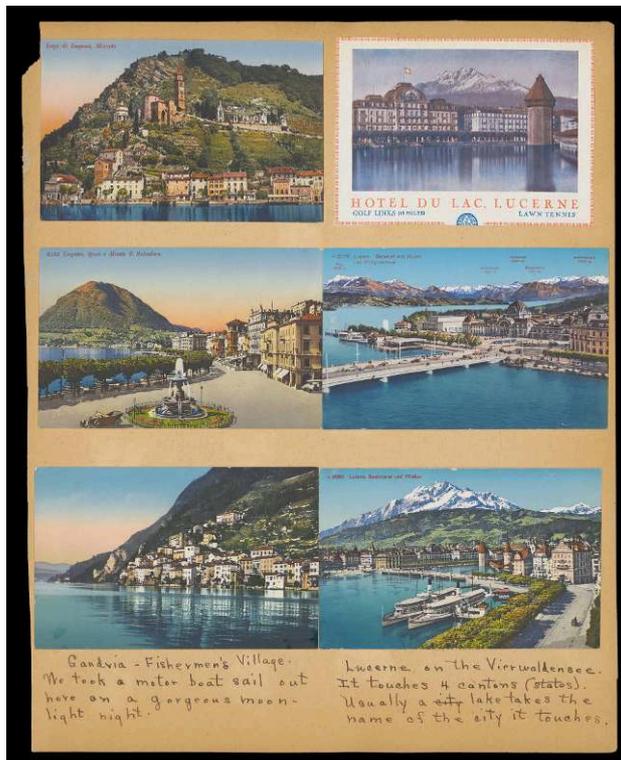
Postcards and snapshots in travel albums and scrapbooks

- 25 Taking Langford’s assumption that “our photographic memories are rested in a performative oral tradition” (Langford viii), we may suggest that postcards and snapshots—the scrapbook’s main photographic elements—both strongly participate in the “re-telling” of the travel album. Nonetheless, their aesthetics and visual language

diverge, contributing differently to the construction of memories and imaginaries of the visited places. It is also important to point out that snapshots and postcards could be easily integrated in albums from the very end of the 19th century, thanks to the production of blank albums, previously created for a “carte de visite” format (Langford 23; Greenough 19), a development described by Elizabeth Siegel as “[t]he demise of the card album [and] the rise of the snapshot album” (Siegel 157). This new liberty in album composition and page layout allowed to construct personal narratives through the collection of different elements—photographic ones existing amid other textual and visual materials.

- 26 While between 1880 and 1920, a “graphic revolution” transformed the economy of both photography and illustrated publishing, the advent of cheap and easy-to-use amateur equipment made illustrated travel narratives and published tourist accounts redundant (Brunet 2009, 54). Technological change was paralleled by a social transformation. In *The Birth of the Idea of Photography*, François Brunet explains that the emergence around 1900 of a mass amateur practice is often considered a moment of “democratization” or even a “major rupture” in the history of photography.⁹ With the hand-held format, one could take views and capture memories of all kinds without needing to acquire expert knowledge first. The “Kodak moment” started from a technological invention and a revolutionary commercial concept, but was above all a sociological change, a cultural revolution of sorts, representing “the transformation of photography into a mass practice and its refoundation as an instrument of ordinary, everyday memory and fantasy” (Brunet 2019, 255).
- 27 More and more people were able to make their own photographs, and at the same time, the circulation of commercially produced pictures augmented. For instance, from the end of the 19th century, the massive and international production of illustrated postcards becomes increasingly industrial, moving away from earlier artisanal practices (Bouillon). If Kodak’s snapshots represented the changing language of modernity (a “spontaneous”, perhaps even modernist aesthetic), postcards would express standardized and conservative views of tourist sites. They contributed to the creation of a common imaginary of localities, adapting their representation to their commerce and expected circulation.¹⁰ Postcards’ original function being the democratization of knowledge and communication (Ripert, Frère and Forestier 28), illustrated postcards present a social dimension, as objects supposed to circulate. While the represented scenes often show stereotypes, written annotations serve to personalize these same representations, expressing the relation between mass production and private practice—standardized landscapes and individual impressions—which characterizes this form of cultural production.¹¹ When postcards are collected in a travel album (among other pictures and different materials), words serve more forcefully to translate personal impressions of standardized views or to inscribe specific experiences. The “Althea Hurst Scrapbook” contains, for example, four pages filled with color postcards of Switzerland, presenting in particular “Paradiso” Lugano (“Lugano city of flowers, palms, blue water + Joy”) and Lucerne. On this page (Fig. 9), a typical view of “Gandria – Fishermen’s Village” from the water is accompanied by the personal account “We took a motor boat sail out here on a gorgeous moonlight night.”

Figure 9

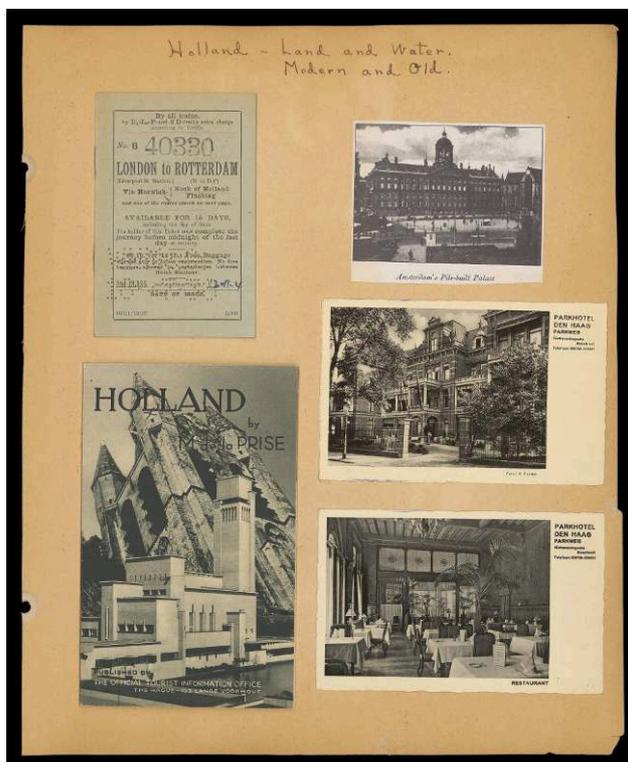


Althea Hurst scrapbook, 1938. Page 65, 38 x 31 cm, Cincinnati & Hamilton County Public Library. Genealogy & Local History Department

- 28 As Maria Antonella Pelizzari pointed out, written annotations often expressed, in the case of some tourist albums of the second half of the 19th century already, the “individual freedom” of interpretation of commercially produced photographs (Schwartz and Ryan 56). They superimposed the pre-established representation of the cities, expressing “the tourist’s imaginary constructions of pre-packaged literary descriptions” (Schwartz and Ryan 56). Through the study of travel albums created between about 1880 and about 1930, Barbara Levine and Kirsten M. Jensen explore, in *Around the World. The Grand Tour in Photo Albums*, “the many ways in which changes to photographic technology over time were employed by album authors—travelers, tourists—to tell stories of their journeys” (Levine and Jensen 18). Modern travel albums often revealed the structured approach to traveling that their authors’ guidebooks employed, but “as leisure travel, tourism, and the technologies associated with them—particularly photography—increased, so did the impulse to personalize the experience” (Levine and Jensen 21-22). Souvenir photographs and postcards could be bought loose and placed in personally made albums. The makers could then add captions or recollections thereby personalizing them further, like Clara Whitcomb (from Chicago) did for her stay in Egypt in 1898: her travel diary is filled with mass-produced souvenir photographs and picture postcards, personal handwritten narrative, linked to images, of what she saw and did, a “personalized account” that could not be found in guides (Levine and Jensen 38).
- 29 Carolin G6rgen has also explored, in her study of a photo album of the San Francisco Earthquake and Fire of 1906, the way captions enrich the visual narrative, affirming that albums “are complex objects whose trajectories cross the private and the public

realm" (Görgen 47). Her case study allows for an in-depth reflection on how citizens documented this exceptional event at the time, in the specific socio-political and historical context of an urban catastrophe. Considering the photo album as a deliberate organization of personal and social experience, in the volume *Snapshot Chronicles: Inventing the American Photo Album*, Levine and Stephanie Snyder emphasize the innovative creativity of the snapshot era, as expressed by album owners who felt free to scribble or draw on the surface of the photographs. We can find an example of this practice in the "Althea Hurst Scrapbook," on the first page dedicated to Budapest (defined as a "Dream City" and "a sparkling jewel at night"). Below the subtitle "Two Cities Buda (old) + Pest (new) divided by Danube R," the Hungarian pronunciation of the word "palace" is added on the surface of a picture showing the "Hotel Palace" (Fig. 10). More generally, we have seen that short annotations like "our table," "our cabin going over" (in the "Empress of Britain" section), or arrows indicating the travelers' hotels, help to personalize the album narrative. Other comments provide historical details, like the handwritten explanation "Earliest University in central Europe founded in Praha 1348," which accompanies a map of Prague and different brochures on the city's monuments and artworks.

Figure 10



Althea Hurst scrapbook, 1938. Page 45, 38 x 31 cm, Cincinnati & Hamilton County Public Library. Genealogy & Local History Department

- 30 The emergence of photograph albums as a widespread cultural phenomenon depended upon technological developments as well as societal and economic conditions. Verna Posever Curtis' *Photographic Memory: The Album in the Age of Photography* traces the rise of the album from the turn of the century to the present day, displaying the works of famous photographers and artists, alongside lesser-known ones, from the collections of the Library of Congress. Including an introductory essay on the history of the photo

album, as well as texts on its status in the digital age and its preservation, the volume also shows how technology impinged on the style and the function of the photo album (and its embedded "personal memories"). More specifically, travel albums evolved as photography itself evolved. Makers progressively included objects from their trips, such as tickets, passenger lists, brochures, or purchased photographs, among others, along with their own snapshots. This is the case of the "Althea Hurst Scrapbook," a hybrid object rather than a typical travel photo album, containing collections of photographs as well as newspaper clippings, maps, and other ephemera. The section dedicated to London is exemplary, as Hurst included, for instance, the collection of photographs titled "An introduction to London," a railway program, a map of the city center, a London souvenir album, the little book *Dickens characters portrayed in verse*, a Christmas card, and "Madame Tussaud's exhibition souvenir & guide."

- 31 In their introduction to *The Scrapbook in American Life*, Susan Tucker, Katherine Ott, and Patricia P. Buckler indicate that scrapbooks and albums share their origins with traditions of collecting, display, and exhibition and the development of print and book styles (Tucker et al 3). From the beginning, the scrapbook and the album were interchangeable in function:

Although scholars and conservators have devoted more attentions to the photograph album, perhaps the more public of the two, many of these books were also used to hold scraps and other memorabilia (Tucker et al 12).

- 32 Able to capture "lived time" in a material form (Tucker et al 2), scrapbooks are a material manifestation of memory: "the memory of the compiler and the memory of the cultural moment in which they were made" (Tucker et al 3). They represent individual and group identity in cultures increasingly dependent on reading, visual literacy, and consumption of mass-produced goods—as the authors put it. "They hold historical accounts in print and images that tell how events and lives were understood and told to others, how individuality spars with the public and the commercial" (Tucker et al 3). Concerning the relation between mass-produced elements and personal appropriation which characterizes scrapbooks, the authors also argue that scrapbooking can become a form of creative control that reconfigures the compiler's relationship to the social economy and to the objects that it produces:

Objects may have originated in the prevailing and impersonal marketplace, but individuals converted the unfamiliar into the familiar by cutting up the materials of capitalism and turning them into gifts to themselves (Tucker et al 18).

- 33 In the case of the "Althea Hurst Scrapbook," commercially produced images and objects are converted into travel memories and turned into elements serving a travel narrative. For example, in the section dedicated to Germany titled "Down The Rhinne [sic]. Koln to Mainz," tourist brochures and guides, maps, black and white images cut from journals, as well as postcards of the hotels the teachers stayed in, are displayed in order to recreate a personal journey.

- 34 Moreover, in Heidelberg, Hurst took a snapshot of the "Old Arena from Caesar's Time" and another of the Hotel Roter Hahn, adding the annotation "Our Table in corner by the window." The fact that the travelers are African Americans, coming from the Jim Crow US and traversing Nazi Germany, heightens the political dimension of the scrapbook. Despite the tense context both at home and abroad, the teachers traveled by themselves and documented their journey. The creation of an album collecting personal photographs, other pictures and objects, as well as comments and

annotations, gives more visibility to this experience. In *Writing with Scissors: American Scrapbooks from the Civil War to the Harlem Renaissance*, Ellen Gruber Garvey shows that, as early as 1854, Frederick Douglass urged newspaper readers to use scrapbooks as weapons in the cause of black emancipation and black suffrage. This practice continued after the war, during the rise of Jim Crow segregation in the United States, as African Americans created scrapbooks that served to present an "unwritten history" that moved themselves (and their people) into the center of the national narrative, by filling in the "gaps in mainstream accounts". They undertook this rewriting by "recontextualizing clippings scissored from both the black and the white press" through written notes contesting the published account or "through the subtle language of juxtaposition" (Garvey 131). Similarly, the scrapbooks created by women working towards the cause of suffrage

reveal them to be in the process of negotiating what it meant to take a place in public, and developing strategies for using the press over the course of decades of women's rights struggles (Garvey 174).

- 35 When shared among like-minded members of a group, such scrapbooks helped consolidate a sense of community. For example, Alice Moore Dunbar-Nelson left a record of her experiences as a paid activist and organizer in the women's suffrage movement of the 1910s in a scrapbook. Sharing commonalities with both white women's suffrage scrapbooks and the tradition of African American scrapbook-making, her scrapbook let her see herself and shape her own public image (Garvey 2016).
- 36 The "Althea Hurst Scrapbook" can be situated at the crossroads of the travel photo album and the scrapbook traditions. Indeed, scrapbooks also served as educational tools, especially when the universal public education movement in the United States encouraged teachers to keep their own anthologies of clippings and artwork for instruction (Tucker et al. 9).¹² Our case study provides an example of instructive documentation. Supposed to be shared with their students, as a way to inspire African American children to move beyond the United States' limits, this scrapbook also reveals the increasing possibility of making and buying pictures at the time, and emblemizes the travel albums' characteristic relation between personal and tourist imagery, private and public dimensions. As we have seen, Hurst included "eyewitness to history" photographs and comments, tourist images replicating "scenes from a collective cultural consciousness" (such as familiar European monuments and vantage points), as well as snapshots inscribing the four teachers' presence in the visited places. Precise information about the past and present of specific locations coexists with more personal details and impressions.

Conclusion

- 37 The "Althea Hurst Scrapbook" has been described as a hybrid object, not only from the perspective of its different materials and forms of expression (images, objects, letters, clippings, and handwritten annotations), but also from that of its double nature, which is private as well as educational. Deriving from travel practices, the photographic elements included in this album become at the same time personal and utilitarian objects, embodying photographic memories of the women's journey and hands-on information for their teachings. Snapshots and postcards, popular and commercially produced photographs like those contained in the "Althea Hurst Scrapbook," can be

interrogated in the contemporary context of the revaluation of "ordinary" or "popular" practices in the field of photo-history, also fostered by the increased exhibition of "vernacular"¹³ objects in museums or libraries, as well as by their digitalization and online circulation. Rather than for their aesthetics, vernacular photographic objects can be regarded for their socio-political and historical value (Görge). As Geoffrey Batchen has explained, vernacular photography encompasses a wide range of photographic practices where the aesthetic or expressive considerations of image-making are secondary to their functional uses, both in terms of image content and in the social use made of those photographs (Batchen 2000). Vernacular photographs invite us to look at their specific contexts of production and circulation: in the case of the "Althea Hurst Scrapbook," the photographs are made or bought during a trip through 1938 Europe, in order to collect memories, documents, and information in a travel album.

- 38 According to Batchen, vernacular photographs present a challenge to the "professional" history of photography (Batchen 2004), by offering a metanarrative on its instable identity. The word "vernacular" is usually employed to place one body of expressive culture in opposition to (or at least in tension with) the perceived powers of a dominant canon, an elite culture, or an institutional context (Herman). Indeed, vernacular photography was long relegated to the margins of photographic history, a history that has occupied itself with photography's fine-art status and so has focused primarily on the self-consciously aesthetic productions of artistic photographers (Cutshaw and Barrett 11). Not being created for exhibition walls or catalogues, vernacular photographs have assumed a "minor position" in this "official" history of photography, while paradoxically they represent the large majority of the photographic production. Indicating that almost the totality of photographic images (postcards, family and travel snapshots...) is not produced by artists or specialists, in the essay "Vernacular Photographies," Batchen has pleaded for the study of vernacular photography, calling into question the dichotomy between art and vernacular in photography studies (Batchen 2000). The challenge would be to bring photography "back to where it belongs", namely to its "vernacular roots", if we agree with John Atlee Kouwenhoven that photography is "the most important visual art (if art it be) whose roots are wholly in the vernacular though" (Kouwenhoven 1982, xii).¹⁴
- 39 In the introduction to the 2020 dossier "Vernacular Ways," Jordi Ballesta and Eliane de Larminat consider photography and vernacular as intimately linked, and affirm that the vernacular in photography invites to embrace the totality of images issued from a popular practice, founded on the appropriation of a mechanical process which, starting from the development of instantaneous photography in the 1880s, no longer requires professional competences (Ballesta and de Larminat 10, 17-18). They also indicate that, rather than speaking of a "vernacular turn", we should consider a history of marginal photographic practices, in comparison to histories focused on aesthetic definitions of the medium. This history would correspond to what Brunet has designated as an "externalist" conception of photography (concerned with popular practices and social history), opposed to an "internalist" one (that of a "professional" history of photography).¹⁵
- 40 Belonging to this "externalist" conception of photography, the photographic elements of the "Althea Hurst Scrapbook" participate in the preservation of the teachers' personal memories, while constituting at the same time a collection of documents

created in order to compare information provided in text books and to encourage African American children to broaden their world view. Indeed, Jim Crow laws relegated black social and cultural life to segregated spaces. The album shows how rich in experiences and memories a journey can be. While the teachers seem to enjoy their time far from the racial segregation of the United States,¹⁶ they also learn about European history, culture, and present socio-political situation, witnessing for instance the rise of anti-Semitism. The album exhibition in a local public library, as well as online, allows its circulation in a wider public sphere, following and fostering Hurst's original intention: not exclusively to collect travel photographs but also to create a sort of pedagogical tool. In the context of the contemporary reevaluation of popular and vernacular practices and objects, this album "discovery" contributes to expand the idea of photographic memory and our knowledge of history through photography, by providing local or "micro" narratives. From a material culture perspective, photographs have "a grounded but never static identity" (Batchen 2000, 78), depending on their different contexts of reception or exhibition. Having left their private or commercial sphere, as well as their pedagogical use, the snapshots and postcards contained in the "Althea Hurst scrapbook" participate in the creation of a travel visual narrative. Through the substitution of a set of viewing conditions, the circulation of "Althea Hurst Scrapbook" outside the spaces of the home and the classroom, then of the Genealogy & Local History Collection of the Cincinnati Public Library, in a physical space as well as online, also questions the relation between local histories and global memories. The perspective of an African American woman, coming from the Jim Crow US and traveling through Nazi Germany and pre-WWII Europe, contributes to the recentring of photographic popular travel narratives from the margins, towards the creation of a wider visual collective memory.

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NOTES

1. A rough survey indicates treatment needs for each page. Pages were batch-processed by several staff members. Notes written directly on the slips of paper were indispensable to communicate and track progress (The Preservation Lab).
2. It is said that Green got the idea for a black travel guide from watching his Jewish friend use a kosher guide to vacation in the Borscht Belt in New York State's Catskill Mountains (Taylor).
3. As the book mentions, she visited many more countries, including England, Ireland, Scotland, France, Monaco, Italy, Switzerland, Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey, Syria, Palestine, Egypt, Soudan, Abyssinia, India, Sri Lanka, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Spain, Denmark, Holland, Norway, Russia, Japan, China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the Philippines.
4. Excluding sets of images collected in boxes and books, therefore not on display.
5. During the pogrom, some 30,000 Jewish males were rounded up and taken to concentration camps. This was the first time Nazi officials made massive arrests of Jews specifically because they were Jews, without any further cause for arrest. Moreover, in the aftermath of the

November pogrom, the Nazi regime ordered the Jewish community to pay a 1 billion Reichsmark "atonement tax" and rapidly enacted many anti-Jewish laws and edicts.

6. It is said that no event in the history of German Jews between 1933 and 1945 has been so widely reported as it was happening (Gilbert 42).

7. Hungary would join the Axis in 1941 and was occupied by Nazi Germany in 1944. Ultimately, 300,000 Hungarian soldiers and 600,000 civilians died, among them 450,000 Jews and 28,000 Roma.

8. This "end" is unresolved. Perhaps Hurst wanted to add the monument to Vittorio Emanuele II?

9. The Kodak revolution created, almost from scratch, the popular practice of photography, concretizing an expectation latent since 1839. Indeed, George Eastman was the first to associate the values and rites of consumption, of family and personal intimacy, of private life and memory, with what he called the "photographic notebook" (Brunet 2019, 255).

10. These forms range from local interest to global circulation (Brunet 2018).

11. Added texts show different uses of the images: comments related to the visit of a place or to its photographic representation, explaining or updating the experience or the scene (Brunet 1999).

12. 19th- and early 20th-century educators also promoted scrapbooks as a means of teaching art skills.

13. Broadly speaking, "vernacular" means domestic, indigenous, common, everyday, personal or private. As to photography, it usually indicates a kind of production that permeates daily existence, amateur or popular, reflecting an ordinary and local language. Some recent definitions tend to enlarge this notion: for Clément Chéroux, the term vernacular also designates "utilitarian" (applied, functional), besides "domestic" and "popular" photographs (Chéroux 2013, 10).

14. Considering the mass of photographic usages as pertaining to the technological-democratic regime he defined in 1948, Kouwenhoven affirms that photography "has been influenced, if not distorted, by criteria of the cultivated tradition" (Kouwenhoven 1982, xii).

15. Brunet identifies the years between 1960 and 1985 as the real phase of the "institutionalization" of photography as an expressive medium and art, after having retraced the opposition, since the 1930s, of these two types of histories of photography (Brunet 2019).

16. This segregated world provided a measure of independence for the growing black middle class, yet at the cost of further poisoning the relationship between black and white.

ABSTRACTS

In the summer of 1938, four African American teachers from Cincinnati decided to tour Europe, on their own, by steamship and train. Back home in Avondale, Cincinnati, Althea Hurst created a scrapbook from the snapshot photographs she took, but also from the many postcards, tourist brochures, guidebooks, menus, transport timetables, maps, commercial and artistic illustrations she collected, all accompanied by itinerary and correspondence, precise legends, detailed captions and personal annotations. Some pages of the "Althea Hurst Scrapbook" were on display at the Public Library of Cincinnati in 2016, and the album, entirely digitalized, can be viewed online. This scrapbook is a typical example of a practice of collecting pictures linked to travel. It is at the same time exceptional because it was intended, from the beginning, not only to document a personal journey, but also to compare historical descriptions to actual places, and to

encourage African American students to travel. The "Althea Hurst Scrapbook" will be put in relation to the broader practice of travel photo albums and described as a hybrid object combining images, written annotations, and other materials, thus merging personal photographic memories and educational documentation.

Durant l'été 1938, quatre enseignantes africaines-américaines de Cincinnati sont parties pour un voyage en Europe. De retour chez elle à Avondale, Cincinnati, Althea Hurst a créé un album composé de ses photographies, ainsi que de nombreuses cartes postales, brochures touristiques, menus, plans des villes et illustrations diverses des lieux visités qu'elle avait collectés, le tout accompagné d'itinéraires, de correspondances, de légendes et d'annotations personnelles. Certaines pages du « Althea Hurst Scrapbook » ont été exposées en 2016 à la Cincinnati Public Library, et l'album, entièrement numérisé, peut être consulté en ligne. Ce scrapbook est un exemple caractéristique d'une pratique des images liée aux voyages. Cet album est aussi un cas exceptionnel puisqu'il est destiné, dès le début, à la fois à documenter photographiquement des souvenirs personnels et à comparer les informations contenues dans les manuels scolaires avec les lieux réels, servant d'encouragement au voyage pour les élèves africains-américains. L'« Althea Hurst Scrapbook » sera mis en relation plus largement à la pratique de l'album photo de voyage et décrit en tant qu'objet hybride mélangeant images, annotations écrites et d'autres matériaux et ainsi fusionnant mémoires photographiques personnelles et documentation à fin pédagogique.

INDEX

Mots-clés: scrapbook, album de voyage, enseignantes africaines-américaines, mémoires photographiques, photo-histoire

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