
Guide to the Barbara Abele Bookplate Collection

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Guide to the Barbara Abele Bookplate Collection 1915/1998

Special Collections & University Archives

Overview of the Collection

Collection Title: Barbara Abele Bookplate Collection

Dates: 1915-1998

Bulk Dates: 1970-1998

Identification: MS-0050

Creator: Abele, Barbara

Physical Description: 6.50 linear ft

Language of Materials: English

Repository: Special Collections & University Archives

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Biographical Information:

Bookplates, labels indicating ownership pasted inside the front cover of a book, probably originated in Germany in the mid-15th century. The earliest dated bookplate still in existence was created in 1516, and is also German. In North America the earliest known bookplate, dated 1674, was found in colonial New England, while the earliest example created by an American engraver dates from 1749.

Many themes and motifs can be identified in bookplate creation throughout history. Pictorial bookplates include portraits, images of books, views of libraries, and various landscapes. Early armorial bookplates in 16th-century England consisted of a simple unornamented shield, symmetrically mantled helmet, crest, and scroll where the owner's name was usually inscribed. Allegorical bookplates were popular in France during the reign of Louis XV and in England by the mid-18th century. Personifications of the Christian cardinal virtues and other abstract ideas, such as truth, justice, wisdom, hope, and faith usually appeared on bookplates from this period, as well as symbols of the interests and occupations of the book's owner, such as the scales of justice, and naval and military trophies. Toward the end of the 19th century, German designers began to use nude figures as a major motif in bookplate design. This fashion was followed in the rest of Europe and the United States, where figures were treated naturalistically, sometimes with erotic intent.

A variety of methods can be used to make bookplates. As in the past, the majority of bookplates created today are printed. The plates used for making printed labels may be prepared by any photomechanical processes, such as zinc etching. For finer plates the design may be engraved by hand on steel or etched into copper.

Barbara Abele was a long-time collector and researcher of bookplates. She was the niece of Fridolf Johnson, author of the book *A Treasury of Bookplates from the Renaissance to the Present*, still considered the best modern introduction to the study of bookplates, and spent her life in Redlands and La Jolla, California. She died on April 8, 1998 in La Jolla. She was a member of the American Society of Bookplates Collectors and Designers (ASBCD), and her collection is comprised of thousands of bookplates, sometimes considered miniature pieces of graphic art.

Bookplates are sought by collectors and studied by scholars for the insights they provide into past cultures and societies. Abele's bookplate collection illustrates the wide scope of past cultures and societies, the communication networks created between individuals who shared an interest in collecting and preserving them, and Abele's own personal love of nature.

Also contained in the collection are some records of the ASBCD, formed in June of 1922, of which Abele was a member. Charter members included artists Sara B. Hill, Frederick C. Blank,

Elisha Brown Bird, Arthur H. Noll and collectors Rachael M. Hunt and Carlyle S. Baer. The organization's goal is to further the study and collecting of bookplates. It also serves as a communication network for the entire community of people interested in the history, collection, and preservation of bookplates.

Access Terms

This collection is indexed under the following controlled access subject terms.

Corporate Name:

American Society of Bookplate Collectors and Designers -- Archives

Genre/Form of Material:

Personal Papers

Publications

Personal Name:

Abele, Barbara, d. 1998 -- Archives

Topical Term:

Bookplate Collection

Bookplates -- Collectors and collecting

Bookplates -- History

Bookplates -- Specimens

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Conditions Governing Access:

This collection is open for research.

Preferred Citation:

Identification of item, folder title, box number, Barbara Abele Bookplate Collection, Special Collections and University Archives, Library and Information Access, San Diego State University.

Arrangement of Materials:

I. Bookplates by Subject, A-Z

II. Bookplates by Designer, A-Z

III. Collector Files, A-Z

IV. Correspondence

V. Subject Files

VI. American Society of Bookplate Collectors and Designers (ASBCD)

VII. Published Materials

1.) Bookplates in the News

2.) Other Publications

Scope and Contents

The *Barbara Abele Bookplate Collection* documents the historical development of bookplates, bookplate designers, and collectors, as well as the communication networks they used when interacting with each other. The collection dates from 1915 to 1998 with the bulk of documents created or collected between 1970 and 1998. It consists of six main series: [Bookplates by Subject](#), [Bookplates by Designer](#), [Collector Files](#), [Correspondence](#), [the American Society of Bookplate Collectors and Designers \(ASBCD\)](#), and [Published Materials](#). The [Published Materials](#) series includes two subseries: an incomplete run of the newsletter [Bookplates in the News](#), and other miscellaneous published works, all relating to bookplate collecting and designing.

The [Bookplates by Subject](#) and [Bookplates by Designer](#) series consists of files of bookplates arranged alphabetically by subject, and designer's last name, filed from A-Z.

The [Collector Files](#) are composed of information about different bookplate collectors, and include some correspondence press releases, and news articles.

The Correspondence series consists of correspondence both with individuals and institutions written by Barbara Abele from the 1970s-1990s primarily about sharing and building her collection of bookplates. It is arranged alphabetically by correspondent or general subject.

The Subject Files consist of a few photographs and files generated during research for public presentations made by Abele, and about bookplate collecting. They are filed alphabetically by subject.

The American Society of Bookplate Collectors and Designers (ASBCD) consists of membership directories dating from 1966, 1977-83, and 1992, and yearbooks dating throughout the 20th century, filed chronologically by year of publication.

The Published Materials series is comprised of two subseries: Bookplates in the News and Other Publications. The collection does not contain a complete run of Bookplates in the News, but does include issues from July 1970 to April 1998. They are filed chronologically. The second subseries, Other Publications, includes a collection of published works drawn upon by Barbara Abele when performing research about bookplates and when networking with other collectors and designers. They are filed alphabetically by author, and inventoried in the Container List below.

Bookplates by Subject

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Box 1, Folder 3	Animals
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Box 1, Folder 8	Art Deco
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Box 2, Folder 7	Botanical: Flowers
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Box 3, Folder 8	Don Quixote
Box 3, Folder 9	Early American
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Box 3, Folder 14	Fishing
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Box 3, Folder 16	Foreign Designers
Box 3, Folder 17	Gates
Box 3, Folder 18	Genealogy Societies
Box 4, Folder 1	Hobbies
Box 4, Folder 2	Hourglass
Box 4, Folder 3	Human side of Bookplates (Jones, Louise Seymour)
Box 4, Folder 4	Hotels
Box 4, Folder 5	Indians
Box 4, Folder 6	Initials Only on Plates
Box 4, Folder 7	Lamps
Box 4, Folder 8	Landscapes
Box 4, Folder 9	Lawyers
Box 4, Folder 10	Leather
Box 4, Folder 11	Libraries, California
Box 4, Folder 12	Libraries, Societies, Clubs, Colleges, Institutes, Associations
Box 4, Folder 13	Libraries, United States
Box 4, Folder 14	Library Interiors
Box 4, Folder 15	Lincoliana
Box 4, Folder 16	Lugano, Italy
Box 4, Folder 17	Lugano, Italy
Box 5, Folder 1	Maps, Globes
Box 5, Folder 2	Masonic Plates
Box 5, Folder 3	Mermaids
Box 5, Folder 4	Military Plates
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Box 5, Folder 6	Monks
Box 5, Folder 7	Mottos and Verse
Box 5, Folder 8	Music
Box 5, Folder 9	Old Plates
Box 5, Folder 10	Olympics
Box 5, Folder 11	Personal Bookplates
Box 5, Folder 12	Photocopies
Box 5, Folder 13	Premium Plates, Commercial
Box 5, Folder 14	Presses
Box 5, Folder 15	Redlands
Box 6, Folder 1	Redlands
Box 6, Folder 2	Religious Buildings
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Box 6, Folder 4	Ships
Box 6, Folder 5	Silhouettes
Box 6, Folder 6	Skeletons, Skulls
Box 6, Folder 7	Small Bookplates
Box 6, Folder 8	Sundials
Box 6, Folder 9	Tiffany and Bullocks
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Box 6, Folder 12	University Libraries, California
Box 7, Folder 1	University Libraries, International
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Box 7, Folder 8	Artists' Plates
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Box 7, Folder 14	Brown, Frank Chouteau
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Thomspon, Fred
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Truesdell, Windred Porter
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Abele, Barbara's Public Presentations
Exercise and Flowers
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Photographs
Prices of Bookplates
Prices of Books about Bookplates
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Research / Catalog Cards
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American Society of Bookplate Collectors and Designers (ASBCD)

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