

Stories About New Avenues To Do Research, Part I

Jeroen Staring

Author Details: Retired Dr Jeroen Staring taught mathematics at secondary schools in The Netherlands. His 2005 Medical Sciences dissertation describes the life, work and technique of F. Matthias Alexander. In 2013 he successfully defended a second dissertation, on the early history of the NYC Bureau of Educational Experiments.

Abstract

This (first part of a three-part) case study loosely investigates the results of several new avenues of doing research — via Amazon.com, Ebay.com and other websites.

Key Words: Do-With Toys™; fashion and dress history; the history of toy design; new avenues of conducting research; *The Woman Voter and The Newsletter*. Helen Marot; Caroline Pratt. Charles Darwin; William Zorach.

Introduction

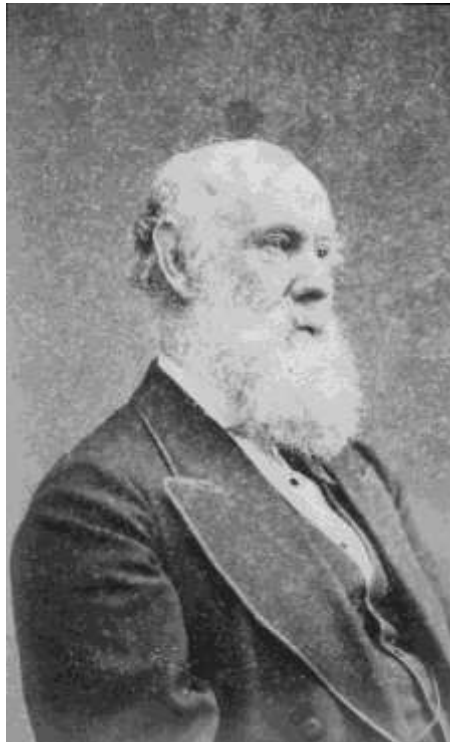


Figure 1: Charles Darwin, or, perhaps, a Darwin lookalike? (Jeroen Staring Collection).

You wonder: “Is this a picture of Charles Darwin?” The photo (see *Figure 1*) actually comes from a carte de visite (CDV) that was recently auctioned on Ebay.com and purchased by the author of this article on February 6, 2020. The card was advertised as “CDV ~ Naturalist Charles Darwin?” In personal correspondence, the Ebay.com seller of the card told that it was originally in an album sold by a Darlington auctioneer. No further provenance could be established.

The photo shows a gentleman in his fifties, perhaps in his early sixties. And indeed, the bearded man looks like naturalist and evolutionist Charles R. Darwin (1809-1882). The front and back of the CDV show that the card was issued by J. Cooper, Ivy House, Bondgate, in Darlington, Durham. No registration number or publication date is printed on the card.

In 1862, between two periods of serious ill health in 1861 and in 1863 (and later), Charles Darwin decided to grow a beard. The gentleman's beard in the photo above is at least a beard of round-and-about one year to eighteen months old. This means that the photo can date from 1863 -- if it is certainly a real photograph of Darwin.

Does historical evidence support a hypothesis that Darwin had a CDV made by photographer J. Cooper, Ivy House, Bondgate, in Darlington when he was between about 54 and about 65 years old? No.

Firstly, it is not known whether Darwin ever visited Darlington.

Secondly, the only connection between Darwin and Darlington appears to be his correspondence with William Alexander Wooler (1813-1891) from Darlington, Durham. Four Wooler letters addressed to Darwin between 1861 and 1868 are known, none from Darwin addressed to Wooler; consult *Darwin Correspondence Project* (n.d.). It is unknown whether Darwin might have sent a picture of himself to Wooler, who in turn may have had it professionally affixed to a CDV card by Darlington's photographer J. Cooper at Ivy House, Bondgate. If this had happened, the CDV is a one-off copy.

Of course there is a good chance that it is a CDV from a hitherto totally unknown person, most probably from Darlington, with a striking resemblance to Charles Darwin.

The example of a Darwin CDV or a Darwin lookalike CDV, purchased via Ebay.com, shows that browsing Ebay.com for CDVs, handwritten autographed letters or other personal items from famous persons can result in really nice searches and interesting research. The three-part case study, of which this is the first part, loosely examines the results of various new avenues of doing research — via Amazon.com, Ebay.com and other websites.

Helen Marot and Her (Lost?) 1913 Article in *The Woman Voter and The Newsletter*

In a paper presentation in 2011 at the Great Lakes History Conference at the Grand Valley State University at Grand Rapids, the author pointed to the role of women's magazines in researching the history of progressive education. For instance, until 2011 researchers of progressive education presented an interview with pedagogue Marietta Johnson in the 16 March 1913 *New York Times* (Edwards, 1913) as the beginning of her fame as well as of the recognition of her School of Organic Education in Fairhope, Alabama.

Publication day of the particular *Times* article was a Sunday. The 1913 Sunday edition of the *New York Times* was 150,000 copies; 1913 daily circulation was 200,000 copies. In stark contrast: an article from a 1912 issue of *Pictorial Review* about the School of Organic Education (Bennett, 1912) had a national circulation of 700,000. That is almost five times higher than the Sunday edition of the *New York Times* (Staring, 2011).

Pictorial Review was a so-called women's magazine. The author's mother was subscribed to the (Dutch) women's magazine *Libelle*, her neighbor friend to another women's magazine, *Margriet*. They exchanged their copy every week. If this type of exchange was also common in the US, we need to multiply the number of readers of the *Pictorial Review* by 1½ or even 2. Moreover, women's magazines were usually read from front to back. This was certainly not the case with Sunday *New York Times* editions. If we look at the statistics in this way, we discover a 'male chauvinistic' biased idea about this (Staring, 2013b), also knowing that volumes of women's magazines from the early 20th century are nowadays extremely scarce in libraries, if not almost completely absent. Still, old volumes of the *Times* are accessible in many American libraries. Researcher of progressive education Noah Sobe (2018, 2019) wholly agrees.

Questions arise immediately. First of all: "Who exactly knew about Marietta Johnson's school in 1912? Did American women know about her, or American men? Narrowed down: did New York City male intellectuals know about her or American women who read national women's magazines?" And, formulated in a different way, "Has part of an early history of the school of progressive pedagogue Marietta Johnson disappeared, along with substantial parts of women's history?" (Staring, 2016).

A few years ago, Professor emeritus Jerry Aldridge and the author published an 1865 to 1920 biography of librarian, researcher of Philadelphia clothing industry, researcher of New York City child labour, labour organizer and writer Helen Marot (1865-1940). All publications by Helen Marot, known and referenced in literature, were listed — except her Secretary's Reports for the Women's Trade Union League

of New York and a 13 May 1911 letter to *Jewish Daily Forward* of which it is not known whether it was published or not (consult Dye, 1980, p. 177, note 25; Poder, 2014, pp. 158-159). The references part of Staring & Aldridge’s biographical article was introduced as follows:

Although this bibliography presents the most inclusive list of published writings by Helen Marot, it is very likely that a fair number of (unsigned) publications still awaits to be identified and verified as Marot’s. (Staring & Aldridge, 2015, p. 28)

Of course, searching for publications on websites such as Bookfinder.com and Addall.com can yield wonderful finds for researchers. What’s more, such websites also provide publishers’ names, places of publication and publication dates (of various editions) of publications. In that sense, they are in fact fast-working literature reference works and might help to find unknown publications. The use of other websites may offer researchers other, perhaps unexpected, but almost unintended, benefits. For instance, if you use the *Look inside* program feature on Amazon.com when you get a hit when searching for certain books, journals, magazines, etc., you can browse almost the entire text of the item that is for sale. This is a fast new avenue of searching through (not yet read) texts. The Amazon.com *Search Inside This Book* feature is extremely helpful too — in many ways (for example, for searching for Marot’s name in those texts).



Figures 2 and 3: Helen Marot’s article “Our Militant Women.” (Marot, 1913).

Moreover, it can be excessively useful for researchers to regularly search Ebay.com or similar auction sites for writings or paraphernalia of people the researcher is studying. This tactic led to success in finding publications by Helen Marot. A completely unknown publication by Marot was sold on Ebay.com in early 2017, less than two years after the publication of the aforementioned Marot biography (Staring & Aldridge, 2015). It is an article from 1913 — entitled “Our Militant Women” — in a suffragist magazine published from 1910 to 1917 by the Woman Suffrage Party. The two-page article is about the considerations of women in extremely poor and miserable circumstances who wrestle to decide whether or not to strike to improve their working conditions and payment (Marot, 1913; see *Figures 2 and 3*).

Perhaps the text of this 1913 Helen Marot article is similar to the text of a (1912 or 1913) speech that she gave at a meeting of the Woman Suffrage Party? After all,

Successive annual reports of the New York branch of the WTUL [Women’s Trade Union League; JS] as well as newspaper reports show that Marot became a competent speaker at meetings of, for instance, such varied organizations as the Redfield Park Congregational Church, the Young Women’s Christian Association, the League for Political Education, or the Woman Suffrage Party — stimulating women to unionize. (Staring & Aldridge, 2015, p. 6).

The specific suffragist magazine was called *The Woman Voter and The Newsletter*, but only in 1913 when the Woman Suffrage Party's *The Woman Voter* was merged with *The Newsletter* of the National Woman Suffrage Association in the state of New York!

Worldcat.org shows that hardly any American libraries have volumes of *The Woman Voter*. And, *Worldcat.org* also shows that not a single library has copies of the 1913 *The Woman Voter and The Newsletter*. Note as well: if you 'google' the keywords "Helen Marot" and "Our Militant Women" there is *not even a single* reference to *any* web document. The September 1913 issue of *The Woman Voter and The Newsletter* indeed seems to be exceptionally rare. Or in other words: the history of American women's suffrage seems unclear; its documents are sometimes hardly available.

Surprisingly, the sale of the September 1913 issue of *The Woman Voter and The Newsletter* with the Helen Marot article did not entirely go unnoticed; *Worthpoint.com* (n.d.) displays the Ebay.com sale of the particular magazine issue to the author. It is certainly a grateful honor for a Marot researcher not only to trace the long-thought lost manuscript from Helen Marot's latest book (consult Staring, 2013a), but also to remove a lost Helen Marot article from oblivion.

Caroline Pratt, a Fully Dressed Do-With Toys™ Doll, and William Zorach

In 1910, Helen Marot's life-long partner, teacher of manual training, settlement worker, researcher of Philadelphia clothing industry, labour organizer and writer Caroline Pratt (1869-1954) — founder of Play School in New York City in 1913, renamed City and Country School in 1919 — sold small wooden dolls with wooden hinges and other toys that she manufactured (Staring, 2013a, 2015, 2018). The toys received the trademark Do-With Toys™ in 1911. During the Christmas festivities season of 1910, famous department store Gimbel Brothers advertised they exclusively sold Pratt's dolls and toys for her (Gimbel Brothers, 1910a-b). *New York Daily Tribune* (1910), *Christian Science Monitor* (1910) and other newspapers reported that Pratt's dolls came as a father and a mother doll as well as a boy and a girl doll, and with patterns for clothes (Staring, 2015). These patterns seem to no longer exist. Moreover, the surviving dolls in the City and Country School archives are all 'naked,' which means they are not wearing any clothes. Yet, it is very likely that the dolls wore original clothing when they were sold in 1910 (until about 1919), and that the textile was cut according to the patterns referred to in newspaper articles and sewn together by Pratt herself.

So, the purchase by the author of a fully dressed Do-With Toys™ doll via Ebay.com in 2018 means not only buying an extremely rare copy of a 'female' Do-With Toys™ doll, but also a hugely rare doll with original clothing made by Pratt herself (see *Figure 4*). It can prove to be valuable not only for research into the history of progressive education (Staring, 2013b, 2015, 2018), but also for the research within disciplines such as the history of toy design (Lange, 2018), doll clothing, textile design or fashion and dress history.



Figure 4: Do-With Toys™ doll, by Caroline Pratt. (© Jeroen F. Staring, 2020). Figure 5: 1950 Inscription in William Zorach (Zorach, 1945. Jeroen Staring Collection).

Addall.com, Amazon.com, Bookfinder.com, Ebay.com and other online auction websites and online marketplaces did not exist 30 years ago. Until the early 1990s, for example, there were only local auctions, auctioneers who published thick printed catalogs, and perhaps there was the possibility of long-distance bids via telephone, telex or fax. At the time it would have been difficult, perhaps almost impossible, to make such finds and discoveries as discussed here. Yet, despite the enormous advances in the opportunities to explore new avenues of research since the mid 1990s, academic researchers are still not exploring the World Wide Web the ways they could. Researchers, for example, must not forget to be creative in finding digitized newspapers. In a section on digital research, the author already referred in 2013 to the icon.crl.edu website that offers a list of international collections of digitized newspapers (Staring, 2013a). But, although genealogical websites are promising in this regard, researchers rarely use them to easily browse through dozens of newspapers. Serious newspaper research is still rare and in any case not really creative (perhaps a stigma from the past?). But research into women's magazines is perhaps, as indicated above, even rarer. Here the World Wide Web certainly offers new possibilities for research that will undoubtedly yield results.

As mentioned above, Caroline Pratt founded Play School in 1913 — the later City and Country School. In 1918, she hired artist William Zorach (1887-1966) to give art instruction to the school's students. Zorach (1967, pp. 72-73) later recalled,

When I was in Yosemite Valley I met Caroline Pratt, the director and founder of The City and Country School, the first progressive school in New York City, then in MacDougal Alley. She saw Dahlov [Zorach's daughter; JS] riding on a burro and said to me, "I wish you'd bring her to our school. I'd love to have her." Dahlov was still too young, but I took Tessim [Zorach's son; JS] to her school and a year later Dahlov also went there. In exchange for tuition I went to the school for a few hours twice a week to watch and guide the children in art work. This led to my working with children in other progressive schools—Walden, Birch Wathen, and Rosemary Hall in Greenwich.

Mid 2019, the author was lucky enough to purchase a William Zorach autographed monograph to Caroline Pratt via Ebay.com (see *Figure 5*). It must somehow come from the estate of Pratt, but the seller in personal correspondence stated he did not know its provenance. Without exaggeration: Zorach's book is both a valuable piece of art history and a valuable piece of educational history.

The seller was happy Zorach's autographed book did not end up in a dumpster.

Is not that striking?

References

- Bennett, H. C. (1912, September). How Fairhope Solved the School Problem. *Pictorial Review*, pp. 12-13, 60. *Christian Science Monitor*. (1910, November 11). Do-With Toys For The Young, p. 7. *Darwin Correspondence Project*. (n.d.). See: <https://www.darwinproject.ac.uk/>.
- Dye, N. S. (1980). *As Equals and As Sisters: Feminism, the Labor Movement, and the Women's Trade Union League of New York*. Columbia (MO), London: University of Missouri Press.
- Edwards, D. (1913, March 16). Founder of Organic Education Tells of New School. *The New York Times*, p. SM10.
- Gimbel Brothers. (1910a, December 19) Advertisement. *The Evening Telegram*, p. 2.
- Gimbel Brothers. (1910b, December 19). Advertisement. *The Evening World*, p. 11.
- Lange, A. (2018). *The Design of Childhood: How the Material World Shapes Independent Kids*. New York, London, Oxford, New Delhi, Sydney: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Marot, H. (1913, September). Our Militant Women. *The Woman Voter and The Newsletter*, pp. 14-15. *(The) New York Daily Tribune*. (1910, November 6). "Do-With" Toys, p. 4.
- Poder, M. (2014). *Manufacturing Coalition: Cooperation, Solidarity and Sisterhood in the New York Women's Trade Union League, 1906-1919*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee.
- Sobe, N. W. (2018). Fontes, Teoris, Escolarização e Infância: Afeto e Copropriedade nas Escolas Progressistas Norte-Americanas do Amanhã [Sources, Theory, Schooling, and Childhood: Affect and Embodiment in American Progressive Schools of To-Morrow]. In J. G. Gondra, M. C. G. Machado, & R. H. S. Simoes (Eds.), *História da Educação, Matrizes Interpretativas e Internacionalização* (pp. 273-296). Vitória, Brazil: Editora da Universidade Federal do Espírito Santo (EDUFES).

- Sobe, N. W. (2019). Affect, Embodiment and Pedagogic Practice in Early-Twentieth-Century American Progressive Education: The School of Organic Education and John Dewey's *Schools of To-morrow*. In F. Berdelmann, B. Fritzsche, K. Rabenstein, & J. Scholz (Eds.), *Transformationen von Schule, Unterricht und Profession: Erträge praxistheoretischer Forschung* (pp. 167-184). Wiesbaden, Germany: Springer VS.
- Staring, J. (2011). *1913-1918: The Unknown Second Lustrum History of Marietta Johnson's Fairhope School of Organic Education*. (Conference Paper). 2011 Great Lakes History Conference, 7-8 October 2011. Pew Campus, Grand Valley State University, Grand Rapids, MI.
- Staring, J. (2013a). Caroline Pratt's Political, Toy Manufacturing, and Educational Life, 1896-1921. *History of Education Review*, 42(1), pp. 85-100.
- Staring, J. (2013b). *Midwives of Progressive Education: The Bureau of Educational Experiments 1916-1919*. Nijmegen: Integraal.
- Staring, J. (2015). Caroline Pratt: Progressive Pedagogy In Statu Nascendi. In M. Raider-Roth & J. Silin (Eds.), *Living a Philosophy of Early Childhood Education: A Festschrift for Harriet Cuffaro* (pp. 46-63, downloadable PDF version). New York: Bank Street College of Education. See: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED556778.pdf>.
- Staring, J. (2016). Marietta L. Johnson's Early 'Organic Education' Work. *International Journal of Case Studies*, 5(6), pp. 15-32.
- Staring, J. (2018). Caroline Pratt's Do-With Toys™ and Unit Blocks. *International Journal of Case Studies*, 7(9), pp. 1-27.
- Staring, J., & Aldridge, J. (2015). Helen Marot's Life and Socio-Political Works from 1900-1920. *International Journal of Case Studies*, 4(2), pp. 1-36.
- Worthopedia. (n.d.). *1913*Rare*The Woman Voter and The Newsletter*Suffragettes NYC*.
See: <https://www.worthpoint.com/worthopedia/1913-woman-voter-newsletter-1857034142>.
- Zorach, W. (1967). *Art is My Life: The Autobiography of William Zorach*. Cleveland and New York: World Publishing Company.
- Zorach, W. (1945). *William Zorach*. New York: American Artists Group.