Communication

Flowers as Symbolic Language in Autograph Books and Artwork

Florigraphy, a means of communication through the use or arrangement of selected flowers, soared in England and the United States during the nineteenth century. While there is no direct evidence of a full floral vocabulary in the Archives’ records, there is a definite rise in a more secular shorthand for communicating love and remembrance. Our best record of it may be in the change in well-wishing from religious to other poetic themes in the Archives’ autograph book collection, with notes and artwork from the Van Vleck sisters, Amelia (Amy, 1835-1929) and Louise (Lou, 1820-1902), and their mid-nineteenth century contemporaries.

Beauty

Flowers as Aesthetic Pleasures in Photographs and Diaries

One needs no special skills to enjoy the beauty of flowers. One does not even need all five senses, as flowers engage our eyes in myriad combinations by place and time of year, by chance and by design. The Archives houses photographs and personal diaries cataloging the community’s engagement with flowers. And, in the diary of Susanna Elisabeth KRAMER (1784-1831), perhaps a look at all five languages of flowers in Moravian Wachovia at once.

Celebration

Flowers in Moravian Birthday Traditions in Greeting Notes and Illuminated Scripture

Moravians often included flowers as part of their celebrations, but they were a special part of Moravian birthday traditions. Birthdays were not just for the individual or the family and close friends – a whole connected community celebrated the day with you and invoked upon you the spiritual blessings of the Lord. We can track changes in birthday traditions by looking at the birthday greeting collection of Sister Maria Schaefer, born Maria Frenzel (1768-1845) for whom we have nearly a forty-year sample in which flowers adorn handwritten birthday wishes.

Dig a Little Deeper. This exhibit was produced by the Moravian Archives in Winston-Salem, NC, with the financial support of the Garden Club Council of Winston-Salem and Forsyth County and the Old Salem Garden Club. For more information, see www.moravianarchives.org