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Album Amicorum of Johann Heinrich Hahn from Heidelberg

In German, with single entries in French and English, illustrated manuscript on paper
Western Germany (Heidelberg, Landau, Mannheim, Strasbourg [modern France], Frankfurt),
1784-1792

97 folios on paper, several watermarks including names of papermakers, not fully visible, original foliation in brown ink only partially visible (leaves cropped), modern foliation in pencil, 1-97, loose leaves and quires of 2-7 leaves (mainly bifolia), EIGHT WATERCOLOR ILLUSTRATIONS, FOUR SILHOUETTES, ONE GOUACHE ON PARCHMENT, ONE ENGRAVING, gilt edges, minor stains, leaves cropped at the top and bottom, in overall very good condition. Loose sheets and quires kept in the original cassette resembling a book with gilt edges, covers and spine of red morocco over pasteboards, richly gold tooled with small flowers and leaves, spine with two labels in dark green morocco entitled in gilt "Stamm / buch" and "J. H. H. 1784," interior of cassette lined with pretty floral paper, kept in a contemporary pasteboard slipcase covered with brown marbled paper (front part lacking), very worn, leather on covers slightly worn and stained, but in overall very good condition. Dimensions 107 x 180 mm.

"Alba Amicorum," or friendship albums, are antecedents to today's social networking sites. This example belonged to a Heidelberg businessman, who collected remembrances from his large entourage, which included many important merchant families. Sometimes recording important events, our album cites the flood of Heidelberg in 1784, one of the greatest natural disasters of the Early Modern period in Central Europe, memorialized here with both a poem and watercolor illustration. Five entries include silhouette portraits, pictorial tokens of friendship fashionable in the eighteenth century. The manuscript survives with its original leather case, decorated with fine gold-tooling.

PROVENANCE

1. Johann Heinrich Hahn identifies himself on the titlepage on f. 1. The entries for Hahn were made in Landau, Mannheim, Strasbourg, Heidelberg, and Frankfurt in 1784-1792.
2. On f. 2 there is a note about Johann Heinrich Hahn, his wife Marguerit Scherrer and his daughter Louise Hahn, written by his granddaughter Antonie Billé (née Hübsel), dated 1877.
3. The manuscript stayed in the family until the twentieth century, as indicated by a piece of paper kept with the manuscript written in 1916 by Hermance Emilie Billé, providing a family tree of four generations from Johann Heinrich Hahn and Marguerit (here spelled Margarethe) Scherrer up to the children of Antonie (here spelled Antoinette) Billé.

TEXT

f. 1, [titlepage], "dem Andencken Hoher Gönner u[nd] Theurer Freunden gewiedmet von Johann Heinrich Hahn 1784" (dedicated to important benefactors and dear friends from Johann Heinrich Hahn 1784).

The album contains 86 entries by the friends of Johann Heinrich Hahn, often with details of the origin of the entries. These include entries from members of important merchant families such as the Gaddum family (Heinrich Daniel, Jacob, and others; ff. 5v-10, 69), Georg L. Gontard (f. 12) and Johann Peter Junge from Düsseldorf (f. 44v). Most of the entries are in German, with one in French (f. 65), and one in English (f. 32). Versos were often left blank (blank ff: 1v, 3v-4, 5, 6v, 10v, 12v-13v, 15, 16v, 17v, 18v, 20, 21v, 22, 23v, 24, 26v, 29, 29v, 30, 31v, 32v, 34v, 35v, 36v-37v, 38v, 39v, 40, 42v-43v, 44, 45, 45v, 47v, 49v-50v, 51v, 52v, 54v, 55v, 58v, 59v, 61v, 62v, 63v-64v, 65v, 66v, 67v-68, 70v, 71v, 72r-v, 73, 74v, 75v, 76v, 77v-78, 79r-80, 81v-82v, 83v, 84v-85, 86, 87v, 88v, 89v, 90v, 91v, 92v, 93v, 94v-95v-97v).

The entry by Georg Bernhard Latmirans from Augsburg is especially interesting and deals with the flood in Heidelberg in February 1784. He painted a fine watercolor view of the flooded city on f. 3, and on f. 4v, he wrote a poem "Wer ist in Heydelberg, der dieses wird vergessen / Wie wir voll Angst und Furcht in Wasser Noth gesessen..." ("Among those in Heidelberg, who will forget this / how we sat full of anxiety and fear in water..."). His entry is dated February 27, 1784. These floods in February and March were among the greatest natural disasters of the early modern period in central Europe; see Deurer, 1784, Fricke, 1988, and the modern note kept with the manuscript.

ILLUSTRATION

Thirteen of the entries are illustrated: eight watercolors (including the title page and the Hahn coat of arms); five silhouette portraits; one engraving; and one landscape in gouache on parchment:

f. 1, Calligraphic titlepage with a watercolor border;

f. 2v, Hahn family coat of arms: a rooster within a shield on unpainted ground and a rooster as crest; the family name derives from the Middle High German word "han" or "hane" for a rooster; painted in full colors and enhanced with gold highlights, the arms depart from known heraldic depictions in that the roosters within the shield and repeated in the crest are naturalistic and oriented to the right rather than the left;

f. 3, Watercolor of Heidelberg during the flood of 1784 by Georg Bernhard Latmirans from Augsburg, within a frame of letters, which are represented in three dimensions as if dropped in space in an "alphabet soup" and which spell out "Also gehts in Heydelberg";

f. 5v, Black shadow silhouette portrait of Jacob Gaddum within a watercolor frame of marble, roses and a laurel wreath;

f. 8, Silhouette portrait of Abraham Gaddum within a remarkably inventive watercolor frame. The silhouette is placed behind the flap-cover of a medallion on which is represented a caterpillar and a butterfly. The medallion is within a frame on which rests a caduceus, a staff entwined by two snakes, deriving from Greek mythology as a symbol of commerce and negotiation;

f. 12, Silhouette portrait of Georg Ludwig Gontard, placed behind a watercolor medallion cover with a fly and roses;

f. 15v, Landscape in gouache on parchment by Johann Heinrich Sejeune(?) from Mannheim, representing, on the right, a town at water's edge (the Rhine?), and on the left, a shepherdess with two sheep drawing water from a well; the two scenes are divided by a classical stone staircase and an artificial structure on which is inscribed in gold "Symbolum Toujours Content";

f. 17, Watercolor in pink tones of a town at water's edge (Heidelberg on the Rhine?) by H. Evit(?) within a yellow frame on which rests a shepherd's spade-staff tied with a pink bow and a basket of flowers;

f. 20v, Watercolor by I. G. Kolb(?) of Strasbourg(?) representing business paraphernalia on a desk: bags of coins, letters, a slate with calculations, sheets from account books, feather quills, bundles of receipts, sealing wax sticks, a small equestrian statue, and two hair pins;

f. 23, Watercolor by Ludwig Karl Mogg (?) representing a country scene with a beehive, a small forget-me-not plant, and a book on which is inscribed "Vergiss mein nicht" (Forget me not);

f. 24, Silhouette portrait of Georg Magnus Jaquet;

f. 26, Silhouette portrait of Sophie Charlotte Schultz;

f. 30v, Watercolor of a bouquet of roses and forget-me-nots by Augustin Worms;

f. 33, Engraving representing a frame on which is written "parterre," cut out and pasted onto the page, forming a "flap";

f. 41, Watercolor of a forget-me-not by E. S.(?) from Strasbourg.

The five silhouette portraits here were made when this artform was at the peak of its popularity. The "silhouette" is eponymous for Etienne de Silhouette (1709-1769), a French finance minister who enjoyed making cut paper portraits. Prior to the advent of photography, silhouette profiles cut from black card were an inexpensive way of recording a person's appearance. From 1760-1830, silhouettes were a popular past time, especially among the upper middle class and the aristocracy, and were often used to express ties of friendship in albums such as this one (Sedda, 2014).

This is a handsome example of an *album amicorum*, or album of friends, in which young aristocrats collected entries from their friends, relatives and acquaintances whom they met during travels and studies. On the pages of the *Stammbuch*, as it was called in German, friends would offer proverbs, sayings, quotes, poems, wishes, often in Latin, but also in other languages, and drawings or watercolors, signed with a date and current location. The *album amicorum* was popular in Germany from the sixteenth until the nineteenth century, mainly among male aristocrats, and in bourgeois and university circles. Although originally recording origins and genealogy, the primary function of the *album amicorum* was to document relationships in time and space for posterity. As one would today with a social media account, the owner would display his album to show his expanded social network and wide circle of friends (see Karr Schmidt, Online Resources).

At first, inscriptions by friends, acquaintances, teachers, and family members were made on the spare pages of printed books, then on copies of emblem books, and finally on books printed sometimes with borders for album use. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries blank copy books, often with lavish gold tooling, could be bought for this purpose. Beginning in the late eighteenth century and onwards, they increasingly became collections of loose sheets in small cassettes or portfolios, as is the case for our manuscript. Throughout their history, the albums usually assumed an elongated horizontal format.

Public collections with important holdings of German *alba amicorum* are the Staatsbibliothek in Berlin, the Staatsbibliothek in Bamberg, the Sächsische Landesbibliothek, Staats und Universitätsbibliothek in Dresden, the Germanisches Nationalmuseum in Nuremberg, and the Herzog August Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel. The Royal Library in The Hague is the major repository of Dutch examples. The British Library in London has a huge collection of albums, purchased en bloc in 1850 from the estate of Erhard Christoph Bezzel, a scholar of Nuremberg history (especially Egerton MSS 1178-1498; later supplemented as Egerton MSS 1536-1607). Princeton University Library has an autograph collection of more than 200 examples dating from the mid-nineteenth century (see below).

The *album amicorum* plays a central role in modern transdisciplinary research studying texts, reception and collecting in cultural and social contexts, and the history of mentalities; see especially the comprehensive study by Werner Wilhelm Schnabel published in 2003. Our manuscript is also of interest for paleographical study, given its many different hands localized to a specific time and place.

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ONLINE RESOURCES

Repertorium Alborum Amicorum

<https://raa.gf-franken.de/de/startseite.html>

Suzanne Karr Schmidt, "Eighteenth-Century Social Networking," October 20, 2021

<https://www.newberry.org/18th-century-social-networking>

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