

The Earliest Dust Jackets—Lost and Found

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Some of the earliest dust jackets reported have subsequently been lost, or are unlocated today. They include an 1839 Baedeker jacket and a jacket from the first English edition of Charles Dickens's *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, published in 1870, once owned by the famous collector A. Edward Newton.

For the past seventy-five years, until early in the Northern spring of 2009, the record for the earliest known dust jacket was held by one issued in November 1832 on an English literary annual called *The Keepsake for 1833*. This jacket was discovered in 1934 by the bookman and author John Carter.¹ It was subsequently lost at Oxford University in 1951. Michael Turner, a retired curator at the Bodleian Library, tells the story:

I think it was in the very early fifties that there was a meeting one evening of the Oxford University Bibliophiles in Bodley. The story I heard, sometime after I came to Bodley at the very end of the fifties, was that John Carter brought his dust-wrapper to show the meeting and when he got back to All Souls, where he was staying with John Sparrow, the dust-wrapper was gone.²

How the jacket was lost is unknown. As Brian McMullin notes it is “no more than a hop, skip and a jump” from All Souls to the Bodleian.³ The jacket was covered with soot, so perhaps someone who didn't recognise its value simply threw it out. Or it could have been stolen or misplaced. Carter later donated many of his books to the Bodleian Library, including the copy of the *Keepsake* that the jacket had covered. If the jacket was stolen, it seems odd that whoever took it didn't also take the book. Whatever happened to the jacket, it was fortunate that Carter had made a photograph of it, so that at least its image was saved for posterity.⁴

Over half a century later, in a twist worthy of a mystery novel, an even earlier dust jacket came to light at the Bodleian during a search for the lost *Keepsake* jacket. In March 2009, in connection with my research for a book on nineteenth-century dust jackets, I contacted the Bodleian about the *Keepsake*. I had always hoped that Carter's dust jacket wasn't really lost, just misplaced. I spoke with Clive Hurst, Curator of Rare Books at the Bodleian. He made a search for the jacket and had a discussion with his retired colleague, Michael Turner. Hurst found no sign of the

¹ Carter reported the discovery of the 1833 *Keepsake* in *Publishers Weekly*, 22 September 1934, 1121.

² Email from Michael Turner, 22 April 2009.

³ B. J. McMullin, “Precursors of the ‘Dust Wrapper’,” *BSANZ Bulletin* 24.4 (2000): 262 n6.

⁴ Carter's photograph of the 1833 *Keepsake* jacket is reproduced in Charles Rosner, *The Growth of the Book-Jacket* (London: Sylvan Press, 1954); in G. Thomas Tanselle, “Book-Jackets, Blurbs, and Bibliographers,” *The Library*, 5th Series, 26.2 (June 1971), plate 1; and elsewhere.

Keepsake jacket, but he did come up with something else to show me that Michael Turner had found years earlier at the Bodleian—a jacket from an even earlier book.⁵ He said it was from another English annual, *Friendship's Offering for 1830*. At first I thought he must be talking about one of the pasteboard sheaths that many early annuals were issued in and which are fairly common today—they are sometimes loosely referred to as “dust jackets.” Or perhaps he meant the book was bound in paper wrappers—he couldn't mean an actual dust jacket. He emailed me a picture of it. It *was* an actual dust jacket.

As can be seen in Figure 1, this dust jacket was printed with advertisements for other books, and it even has a little verse printed on it, a sort of poetical publisher's blurb to prospective buyers of the Romantic Era—not bad for a dust jacket from 1830, although most people would not have recognised it as a dust jacket. It was a “sealed wrapping” jacket, the same type of jacket that had covered the 1833 *Keepsake*—that is, a rectangle of paper without flaps which was designed to enclose the book completely like wrapping paper and to be sealed shut. This appears to be the first style of jacket to be used by publishers—all of the known jackets up to 1850 are of this type.

The existence of this jacket is a stunning revelation. Not only is it older than the *Keepsake* by three years, making it the oldest known dust jacket on record, but like most annuals of that era, *Friendship's Offering for 1830* was issued in the year before the date of the book, which means that this book and jacket were actually printed and available for sale in late 1829. That makes it a doubly important discovery, for it puts publishers' dust jackets for the first time in the 1820s, the same decade that case binding in cloth got its start. This decade also saw the appearance of the first English literary annuals, and as John Carter surmised when he found the 1833 *Keepsake* jacket, it was the combination of these two events—publishers' cloth on English annuals—that evidently “provided the motive for the evolution of the dust-wraper.”⁶

The 1829 jacket is beautifully preserved too. It is in far better condition than Carter's *Keepsake* jacket. It is clean and complete, and its fold marks show quite clearly how these jackets were sealed around books. It even retains its spots of red sealing wax.

The *Friendship's Offering* jacket had been preserved in the nineteenth century by a Yorkshire fellmonger and antiquary named Gillyatt Sumner, who had written his name and town—“Woodmansea”—on the back of the jacket (Figure 2). Sumner was a well-known collector of ephemera such as old deeds, mortgages and advertising paper. It was probably the advertising on the jacket that caught his eye.

After Sumner's death in 1875, the 1829 jacket was purchased at auction by the Bodleian Library—minus its book. At some point the two had been separated and

⁵ Email from Clive Hurst, 25 March 2009.

⁶ *Publishers Weekly*, 22 September 1934, 1121.

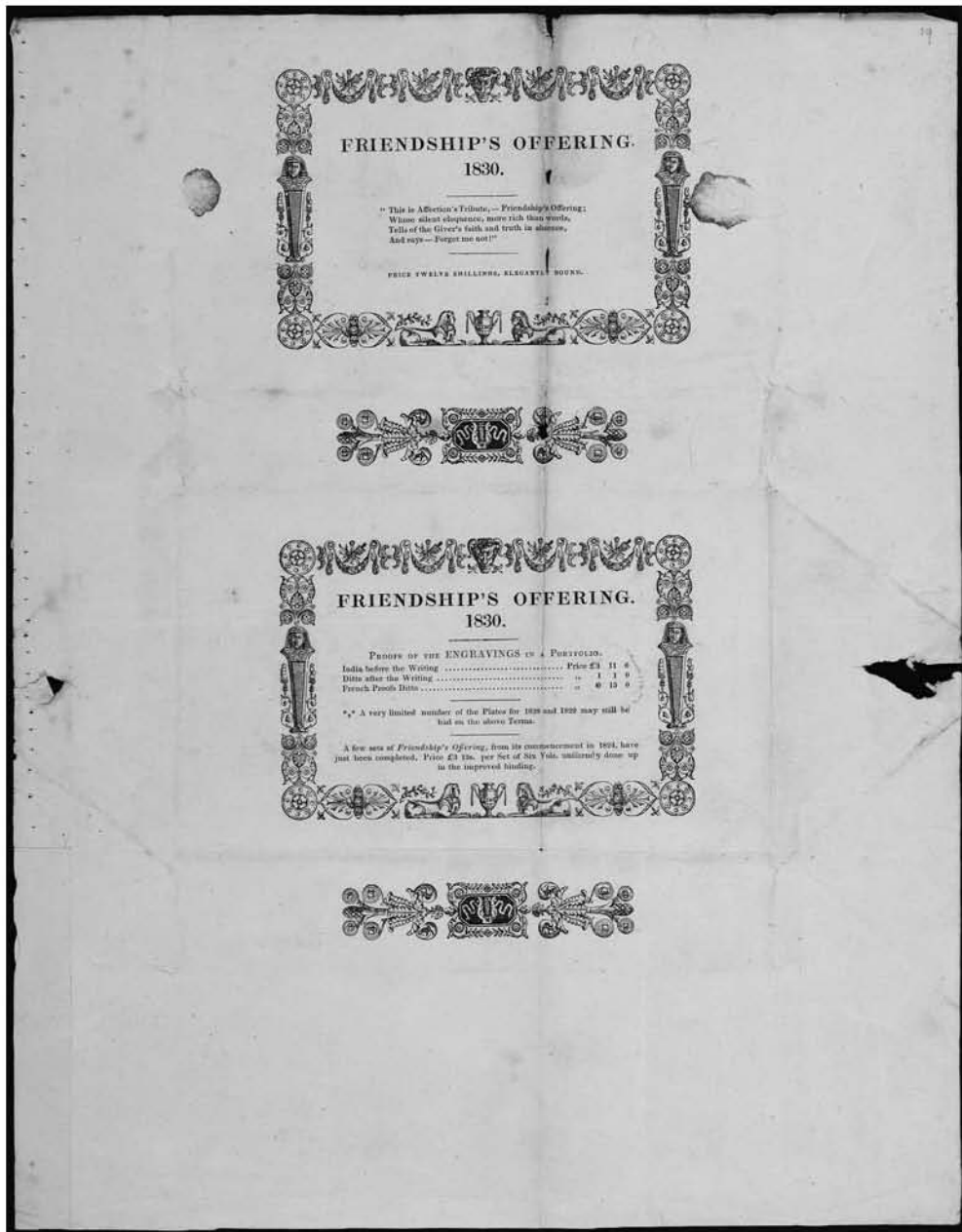


Figure 1. Wrapper belonging to Friendship's Offering for 1830. Image courtesy of the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, G. Pamph. 2920,2921, fol. 19r.

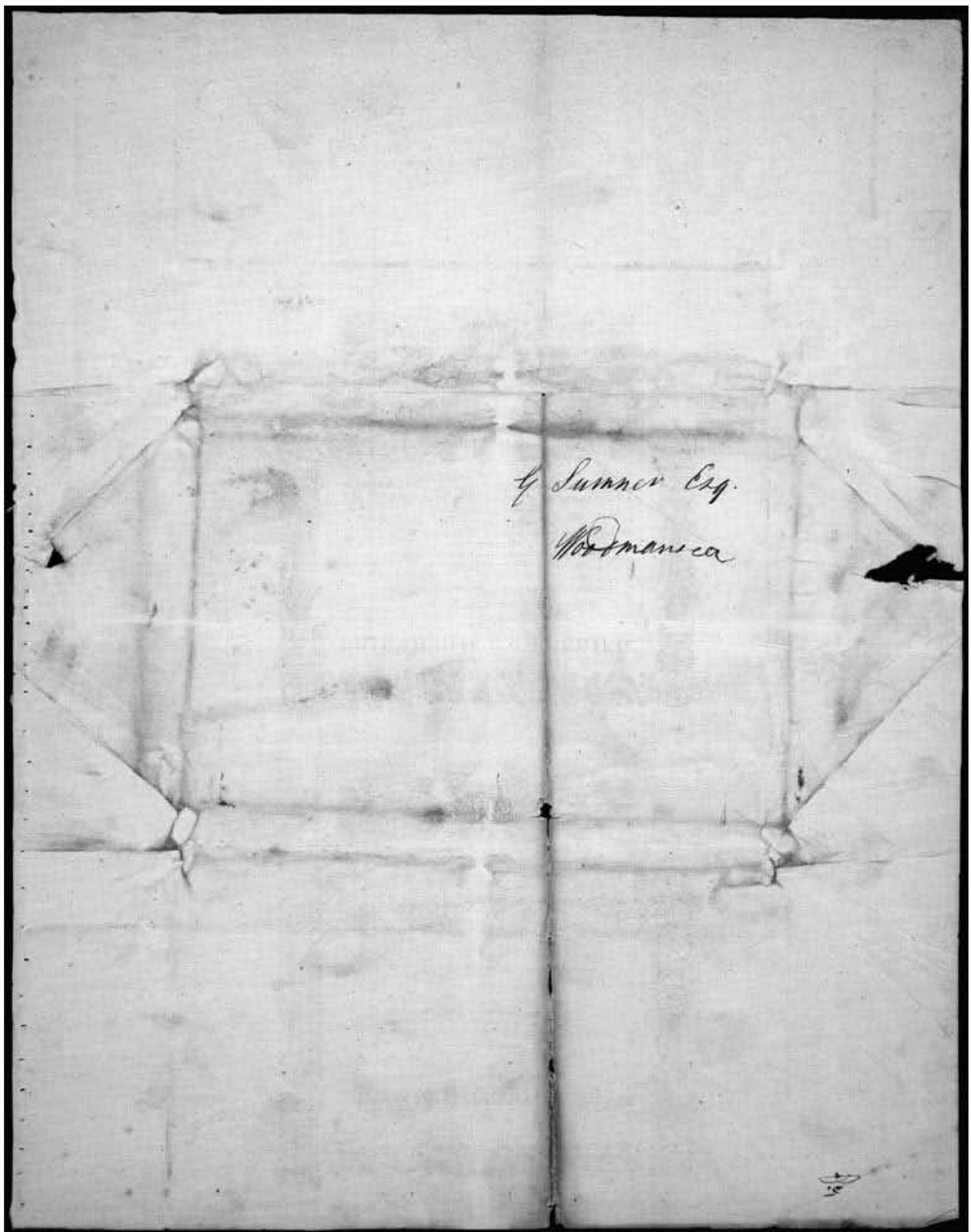


Figure 2. Inside of wrapper belonging to Friendship's Offering for 1830. Image (inverted) courtesy of the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, G. Pamph. 2920,2921, fol. 19v.

the jacket bound up with other book-trade ephemera.⁷ The loss of the original book is lamentable, but the state of preservation of the jacket is remarkable.

Michael Turner found this jacket in the 1970s in the Bodleian's pamphlets collection, where it had sat forgotten and overlooked—lost, you might say—for a century. He used it as a slide illustration in some postgraduate classes he taught, but its existence was not reported to the outside world. It was not recorded in Tom Tanselle's lists of early dust jackets or anywhere else.

The existence of this jacket gives the Bodleian the rather odd distinction today of having the jacket but not the book for the 1830 *Friendship's Offering* and the book but not the jacket for the 1833 *Keepsake*. And in a final odd note to the story of these two early dust jackets, the copy of John Carter's *Keepsake* at the Bodley has a contemporary calling card affixed to the front endpaper with the name of "Mrs. Carter" on it. She was very likely the person who originally opened the sealed wrapping jacket on the *Keepsake* and then, instead of discarding it, refashioned it into a jacket with flaps so that it could continue to be used to protect the book. It is not known whether she was any relation to the man who discovered it just over a century later.



Over the past seventy-five years other highly important early dust jackets have been reported which are also lost today—or at least their whereabouts is unknown.

One intriguing example is a jacket, reported in 1971 by Jerome E. Anderson,⁸ on a book published in Germany by Baedeker in 1839: Friedrich Hoffmann's *Fünfzig Räthsel und Bilder für Kinder von 8-12 Jahren*. The jacket was not a "sealed wrapping" type but of the modern style with flaps that covered just the binding and left the text block exposed. In fact, it is the earliest example of a flap-style jacket ever reported. However, its age has never been verified and its location is unknown. This jacket was said to be printed on porous pink paper and to have printing on both panels and the spine, including advertisements for other books. If its date of issue is correct, it would be by far the earliest known jacket of the flap-style issued by a publisher.

No other flap-style jackets are known until the late 1850s, and several of these are also unlocated today. In 1968, John Carter reported two sets of English books in jackets:⁹ (a) *The Comprehensive History of England*, by Charles MacFarlane and

⁷ Email from Clive Hurst, 27 March 2009.

⁸ G. Thomas Tanselle, "Dust-Jackets, Dealers, and Documentation," *Studies in Bibliography* 56 (2003–4): 85.

⁹ Reported to Tanselle and listed by him in 1971. "Book-Jackets, Blurbs, and Bibliographers," 118. In this 1971 article, Tanselle cites the second set as published 1858–62. He corrects this to 1862 in "Dust-Jackets, Dealers, and Documentation," 104 (no. 62.1). The set was issued in parts from 1858–62, but the cloth-bound set in jackets comprising all the parts did not appear until 1862.

Thomas Thomson, in four volumes, published by Blackie & Sons in 1857; the jackets were printed on the spines and included the price; (b) *A Comprehensive History of India* (1862), by Henry Beveridge, also published by Blackie, again with printing on the jacket spines. Like the 1839 Baedeker, the location of these jacketed sets is unknown, and they have never been verified, although it would be hard to find a more competent investigator than John Carter.

Carter, who was nothing if not indefatigable, was responsible for the announcement of other early jackets too. In 1931 he reported a dust jacket on a copy of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, published in London by Longman & Roberts in 1860.¹⁰ This jacket reigned for decades as the earliest known illustrated jacket;¹¹ its front panel has a woodcut scene that also appears in the book. The jacket was printed in red ink and was in the collection of Thomas Balston, a director of the English publisher Duckworth, when Carter reported it. Where it is today is unknown.

Perhaps the most intriguing of the lost dust jackets—at least after the 1833 *Keepsake*—is the only dust jacket known on a first edition of Charles Dickens. It is not the earliest jacket by a long shot, but it is easily one of the most valuable—perhaps *the* most valuable nineteenth-century dust jacket still extant, assuming it is still extant. It was issued on the first edition in cloth of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, published in London by Chapman & Hall in 1870. It was owned by A. Edward Newton and was sold after his death at the famous auction of his library in 1941. This jacket appeared as the frontispiece in *The First Editions of the Writings of Charles Dickens* (1932) by John Eckel,¹² but where it ended up after the Newton auction is unknown. No other copy of *Edwin Drood* has ever turned up in a jacket (nor is one likely to) and it is hoped that the Newton copy will once again come to light.

The existence of several of these now missing jackets was first reported in the 1930s in the pages of *Publishers Weekly* where John T. Winterich was conducting a long-running inquiry with readers of his column (including Carter), trying to determine how far back dust jackets went. The 1839 Baedeker jacket and the Blackie English sets were reported to Tom Tanselle and mentioned in his groundbreaking article on dust jackets in *The Library* for June 1971.

Tanselle also listed five examples of jackets of the all-enclosing sealed-wrapping style on copies of the English annual *The Juvenile Scrap-Book* for the years 1845 and 1847–50, the last three of which are unlocated today. (The first two examples of this annual in jacket, for 1845 and 1847, are at the University of California, Los Angeles.)¹³

¹⁰ *Publishers Weekly*, 15 August 1931, 617.

¹¹ A copy of William Wordsworth's *Pastoral Poems* (London: Sampson Low, Son, & Marston, 1859) was reported to me in 2008 in a jacket illustrated on the front panel with a woodcut scene.

¹² John Eckel, *The First Editions of the Writings of Charles Dickens* (1913; rev. and enl. New York: Maurice Inman; London: Maggs Bros., 1932).

¹³ Reported by Tanselle in 1971 and 2003–4. See "Book-Jackets, Blurbs, and Bibliographers," 117–18, "Dust-Jackets, Dealers, and Documentation," 102 (no. 44.1, 46.1, 47.1, 48.2, 49.2). Copies in jacket

Given the lack of interest in dust jackets that was prevalent during much of the twentieth century, not to mention the many ways that even a well-cared-for dust jacket can become lost, damaged or destroyed, it is possible that some of these missing dust jackets have been lost for good. But if they still exist, their locations should be recorded, dates of issue established, and images published, before they go the way of the 1833 *Keepsake*.

North Canaan, Connecticut

Appendix

Important books in jackets that are unlocated today include the following:

- 1860 Edward Falkener, ed., *Daedalus* (London: Longman, Green, Longman, & Roberts, 1860). This book has a sealed-wrapping jacket with flaps that are sealed over all three sides of the text block. In the 1990s about eight copies in jackets were sold at an auction conducted by Lawrences of Crewkerne, Somerset, but none can be located today.¹⁴
- 1865 William Cullen Bryant, *The Bryant Festival at "The Century"* (New York: Appleton, 1865).
- 1869 Aubrey De Vere, *Irish Odes and Other Poems* (New York: Catholic Publication Society, 1869). This book has a sealed-wrapping jacket.
- 1869 Robert Buchanan, *Ballad Stories of the Affections, from the Scandinavian* (London: Sampson Low, 1869).
- 1870 *The Sermon on the Mount* (1870). Reproduced in *The Growth of the Book-Jacket*,¹⁵ this book is identified only as being published in Great Britain in 1870. The jacket appears to be of the sealed-wrapping type.
- 1875 Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *The Hanging of the Crane* (Boston: James R. Osgood, 1875).
- 1878 Anthony Trollope, *How the "Mastiffs" went to Iceland* (London: Virtue, 1878).
- 1881 Joel Chandler Harris, *Uncle Remus* (New York: Appleton, 1881).
- 1884 "Don Juan" [John E. Wheelock], *In Search of Gold: The Story of a Liberal Life* (New York: Thompson, 1884). This book has a sealed-wrapping jacket, the latest one known. On the front flap it had these instructions: "Cut open at this line and use wrapper for outside cover."¹⁶

for the years 1847 through 1850 were in the collection of B. S. Long in 1935. Copies in jackets for 1847 and 1848 were at the Beauchamp Bookshop in 1952 (*ibid.*, 102). The two copies presently at the University of California, Los Angeles, for 1845 and 1847 are in the Department of Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, AY11. J97.

¹⁴ Peter Baring identifies the auctioneer in a letter of 2 February 1999, but does not provide a date for the auction. "Precursors of the 'Dust Wrapper,'" 264.

¹⁵ *The Growth of the Book-Jacket*, x.

¹⁶ "Dust-Jackets, Dealers, and Documentation," 82.