“Respectfully Dedicated to My Friends, Messrs. Bradley & Rulofson”
Photographically Illustrated Sheet Music and Connections Between Photography Studios and Sheet Music Publishers in the 1860s and 1870s
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Introduction
When: The early 1860s through the early 1880s.
What: Sheet music illustrated by adhering paper photographs (usually of celebrities) directly to the printed cover.
Research began with The Huntington’s collection of about 50 items.
Where: San Francisco was a major center, although these objects were created in cities around the United States.
How many: Unknown, but comparatively rare.
Who: Photographers/studios, sheet music publishers and dealers, printers, and musical celebrities.
Why they are significant: These objects illuminate connections between photography and printing history. Photographs by well-known photography studios can be discovered “hidden” in sheet music collections. These objects provide a glimpse into post California Gold Rush/early Gilded Age life.

Photographic Components

- Nearly always albumen, although earliest examples can be salted paper prints.
- Often carte-de-visite size in the 1860s, with cabinet card size becoming more prevalent as the era progresses.
- Adhered directly to the cover, usually distorting the cover.

Photographic Ink
These covers were usually lithographically printed in color.
- Most are a single color, but a few may use up to 4 inks.
- The music itself was generally intaglio, in black ink, and would be set by a different printer.

Sheet Music Paper
Machine-made wove paper. Usually medium quality for the era and location.

Copyright
- May be held by the publisher or the composer, as here.

Price
- 50 cents here (“$10 USD today). Ranges from 40 cents to $1. There may be two printed prices, one about 10 cents cheaper without the photograph.

Performers/Composers
- Usually the singer. Despite San Francisco’s cosmopolitan status, performers in this collection all appear white. Other celebrities, such as Hawaii’s King Kalakaua (a composer), occasionally feature.

Other Store Locations
As the era progressed, music publishers created distribution links among different cities.

Common Condition Problems
- Creases: In the cover only, radiating out from the adhered photograph, usually strongest on the right side.
- Key identification factor, often visible even in thumbnail digital images from scanned microfilm.
- The sheet music only partially restrains the photograph’s tendency to curl. Differences in hygroscopicity between photograph and cover paper result in dramatic creases.

Conservation & Handling Suggestions
- Accept creasing as a distinguishing feature of this technique, rather than a flaw. Attempts to open out the creases will redistribute them, causing additional stress on the photograph.
- If individual creases must be opened to reveal text, work locally on the crease from the outer edge of the sheet music inwards, to leave the area near the photograph as undisturbed as possible.
- Provide extra support when handling to minimize flexing of the photograph.

Conclusion
These hybrid objects illustrate the mutually beneficial relationships between photographic publishers and music publishers, composers, and performers. They provide a little extra thought in handling and housing compared with standard sheet music and standard albumen formats. There are likely many more of these hybrid items in sheet music and ephemera collections. Potential future research includes investigating the commissioning and selling of these pieces, best approaches for treatment, and comparison with cardboard-mounted portraits. This research has focused solely on the San Francisco scene, but similar pieces were probably being made wherever music and celebrity portraiture markets overlapped.

Selected References and Online Sheet Music Catalogs

Eula Sheet Music Catalog:
Johanna Neuhäusler, Jennifer L. Lanyi Collection of Sheet Music (here dedicated “inigo, lithographer, artist” Field makes it possible to find items by photography studio, which is unusual).
- ESLCS: Sheet Music Collection
- The California Sheet Music Project
- The Library of Congress (search by music publisher or composer in “Related Music” Photographers is generally not part of these records).

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