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AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 DOCUMENTS

A Journey Through the U.S. Congressional Serial Set

GPO

U.S. GOVERNMENT PUBLISHING OFFICE

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American Government documents are about far more than America. Several years ago, Steven Daniel, Senior Editorial Consultant for Readex, Inc., illustrated this point by tracing the path of Jules Verne's character Phileas Fogg in the beloved novel *Around the World in 80 Days* with documents from the United States Congressional Serial Set.

Fogg's challenge, a gentlemanly wager begun in London's Reform Club in the autumn of 1872, was to go around the world, by land or sea, returning to the spot by 8:45 p.m. on the 80th day after the bet was made. Steve Daniel's challenge (somewhat less peripatetic) was to find Congressional documents corresponding to the places that Verne touches in Fogg's journey with his hapless servant Passepartout.

The Congressional Serial Set has been compiled since the 15th Congress in 1817. It includes House and Senate committee reports, documents, treaty documents, selected nongovernmental organization reports, and Presidential documents. A committee charged with looking at the future of the set in the 1990s declared it "without peer in representative democracies throughout the western world."

In all, Jules Verne (who, incidentally, never set foot outside France) lists or describes action in about 30 locations. Fogg's adventures (and misadventures) make very entertaining reading, and Congressional documents may not always have the same narrative allure. But with some sleuthing, and a minimal amount of license, Steve Daniel made his case. The documents he chose give a vivid picture of the interests of the U.S. at the time and show a wide variety of GPO's printing capabilities in the second half of the 19th century.

The period of *Around the World in 80 Days* was a time of massive U.S. growth and expansion, and was the decade when GPO, with 10 years of service to Congress and the Nation behind it, began to be thought of in the terms that would describe it for decades to come: the largest print shop on earth.

This display takes a selection from the locations on Fogg's route to illustrate the broad reach and, in some cases, great attractiveness of GPO's work as embodied in the Serial Set. Far from being what the bibliographer J.H. Powell once described as "least-esteemed books" this selection shows the appeal of the Serial Set not only for historians, but for collectors, students, and lovers of adventure everywhere.

An Introductory Note by STEVEN DANIEL

I have always made the point that American Government Documents are not just about American government and indeed are not just about America. So when it was suggested that I might give a breakfast talk at the 2005 American Library Association meeting about international content in the U.S. Congressional Serial Set, I readily accepted the challenge and decided to build a talk using the storyline of Jules Verne's novel *Around the World in Eighty Days* as a theme. This display is based on that talk.

The novel which most of us have read in our teen years is a perennial favorite without being a particularly great piece of literature. The notion of world travel, indeed of traveling literally around the world, holds a grip on our imagination and that of Hollywood filmmakers.

Phileas Fogg with his manservant Passepartout depart London on October 2, 1872. They pass through France and Italy by train (not by balloon and with no detour to Spain, as in the film) and leave for the East on the steamer Mongolia from Brindisi on October 9. The Mongolia crosses the Mediterranean, transits the Suez Canal, the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, and deposits Fogg in Bombay on October 20. He then travels across India by train and elephant. On October 24 he and his rescued Indian noblewoman depart Calcutta on the steamer Rangoon which takes them to Hong Kong after a brief stop in Singapore. The party is briefly separated at Hong Kong with Fogg traveling on to Shanghai by a rented vessel and reuniting with Passepartout in Yokohama. From Yokohama they depart for San Francisco on November 14. Verne, who never visited the United States and had a rather vague idea of American geography provides a mercifully brief, but very odd, account of the hero's passage across the continent. In New York Fogg just misses his connection with the Cunard liner and rents another vessel to carry him across the Atlantic to Ireland and then on to London. There are some final misadventures that are best to read for yourself, but this provides us with a quick summary of his itinerary around the world which we will now try to mimic with contemporary Serial Set publications. As you will see, it wasn't in fact possible to identify 1872 imprints to match all of the ports of call and modes of transportation, but I was able to come pretty close.



“Is sir traveling?” [asked Passepartout.]

‘He is,’ replied Phileas Fogg ‘we’re going around the world.’”

Phileas Fogg and Passepartout depart London from Charing Cross Station on October 2, 1872. They pass, with little comment, through France and Italy by train, arriving at Brindisi, Italy on October 9.

SERIAL 1780

S. EXEC. DOC. 24, 45/2

FRANCO-GERMAN WAR AND THE INSURRECTION OF THE COMMUNE

The American ambassador to France's diplomatic correspondence covering the period of the Prussian siege of Paris in 1871 and the short-lived Paris Commune. Although concluded before Fogg's journey, the events would have been fresh in the mind of everyone, especially those traveling across Europe.



STEAMER TRAVEL

“ ‘In Africa’ repeated Passepartout, ‘I simply can’t believe it.’ “

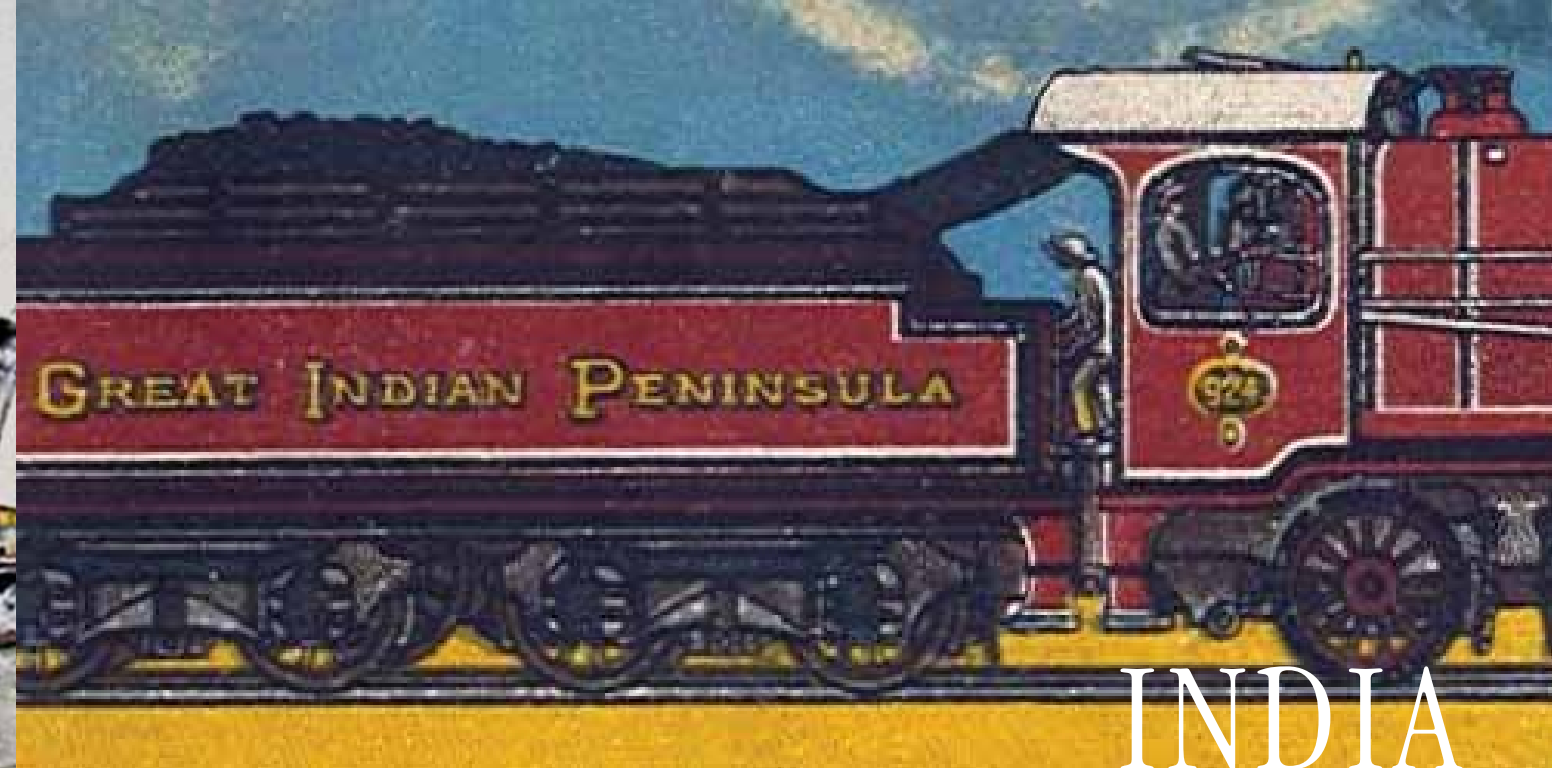
Fogg’s wager permitted travel on land or sea. His first maritime leg left from Brindisi, en route to Bombay (now Mumbai) via the Mediterranean, the Suez Canal, the Red Sea, and the Indian Ocean.

They traveled on board the Peninsular and Oriental Steamship Company’s liner Mongolia which Verne describes as “a screw-driven iron steamer with a spar-deck of 2800 tons burden and 500 hp.”

The Suez Canal opened in late 1869 and had been a decade under construction. It is one of the transportation “novelties” Verne includes in Fogg’s journey.

SERIAL 2119
H. MISC. DOC 20, 47th Congress
REPORT OF THE BOARD ON BEHALF OF THE UNITED STATES EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENTS
AT THE INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION HELD AT PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA, 1876

The Government sent agents to the Philadelphia Exhibition to make reports on the exhibits. The five page description of the construction and operation of the Suez Canal includes a fine map.



INDIA

“What can I say, sir, the newspapers were wrong.”

Our travelers arrive in Bombay (now Mumbai) on October 20 and proceed immediately eastward on the Great Indian Peninsula Railway, assured that the line has been completed from Bombay to Calcutta. Their plan is to reach Calcutta, via Allahbad, in three days.

SERIAL 1664
SENATE EXECUTIVE DOCUMENT 94, 44TH CONGRESS
IRRIGATION AND RECLAMATION OF LAND AS NOW PRACTICED IN INDIA

Among the many documents in the Serial Set related to India is this interesting report on agricultural advances, with a number of nice maps and illustrations.



“ ‘By my slippers,’” exclaimed Passepartout, ‘it’s quite a price to pay for elephant-steak.’ “

Plans, however, are sometimes too optimistic: the railway line stops 50 miles short of Allahbad. Fogg and Passepartout continue on an elephant named Kiouni which Fogg purchases from its owner £2000.

It is on this stage of the trip that Mrs. Aouda, the ill-fated young Indian woman, becomes a member of the party.

SERIAL 1121
SENATE EXECUTIVE DOCUMENT 23, 37TH CONGRESS
LETTTER FROM THE KING OF SIAM

Although there is relatively little in the Serial Set about elephants, there is this charming 1862 letter from the King of Siam to President Lincoln, offering to send breeding pairs of elephants to America, to establish herds in the “torrid zone.”

“...above them Phileas Fogg moved in majestic indifference. He was following his own rational orbit around the world ...“

Fogg’s time in Singapore is brief, although the passage onward to Hong Kong is eventful. It is worth noting here that much of the journey to this point has been conducted on British soil, the empire being nearly at its widest in this period.

SERIAL 1913
HOUSE EXECUTIVE DOCUMENT 20, 46TH CONGRESS
CONSULATE AT HONG KONG

SERIAL 618
SENATE EXECUTIVE DOCUMENT 38, 32ND CONGRESS
DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENCE RELATED TO THE
OPENING OF THE CONSULATE IN SINGAPORE

Diplomacy in the Far East was a major concern of the 19th century American Government. These two documents give a view of two U.S. consulates by prominent diplomats: John Baslister, who was among the first diplomats in the region, and later John S. Mosby, a former Confederate officer who was appointed Consul in Hong Kong by President Hayes.



JAPAN — PACIFIC MAIL

“ ‘Can it be you?’ [said Fogg]
‘It is.’ [said Passepartout]
‘Well.’ In that case, to the steamship, my good fellow.’”

After a separation, and further adventures on sea and land, our travelers are reunited in Yokohama, and embark on a 2500 ton Pacific Mail Steamship vessel called the General Grant for San Francisco.

SERIAL 802
SENATE EXECUTIVE DOCUMENT 38, 33RD CONGRESS
NARRATIVE OF THE EXPEDITION OF AN AMERICAN
SQUADRON TO THE CHINA SEAS AND JAPAN

One of the best known government documents of all time and one of the most beautiful, is Commodore Matthew Perry’s report on his 1852-54 expedition. It represents a high point in Congressional publishing with magnificent illustrations and maps.

SERIAL 1483
SENATE REPORT 33, 42ND CONGRESS
A BILL TO INCREASE FUNDING
FOR THE TRANS-PACIFIC MAIL SERVICE

Over 70 Serial Set documents refer to the Pacific Mail Steamship Company, including this one that describes a contract between that corporation and the Post Office Department.



RAILROADS

“America isn’t very far, and from America to Europe is hardly any distance at all!”

Our party arrive safely in San Francisco in time to observe an election, and depart for points east on the Union Pacific Railroad, which had opened when the golden spike was driven at Promontory Point Utah in 1869.

SERIAL 1141
HOUSE MISCELLANEOUS DOCUMENT 12, 37TH CONGRESS
PACIFIC RAILROAD

Verne had many technological preoccupations in his writings, and in this novel he makes a great deal of the completion (more or less) of the trans-India railway, while never mentioning the American transcontinental line. Without the line across India, the 80-day trip would still have been possible by ship, but without the American railroad, it would have been impossible. This well-known report by Theodore N. Judah outlines a practical route across the Sierra Nevada, and this report led directly to legislation that funded the transcontinental railroad.



THE AMERICAN WEST

“It was now downhill all the way to the Atlantic . . . “

The travelers have a colorful journey across the West and the Great Plains that includes Mormon history, the arrangements for a duel, and an Indian raid.

The expansion into the American West in the mid-19th century is copiously and lavishly chronicled in the Serial Set. Some of the most beautifully produced documents ever issued by the American Government appear, and there are not only thrilling narratives of exploration and discovery, but gorgeous illustrations, extensive scientific observations, and beautiful maps.

SERIAL 608
SENATE EXECUTIVE DOCUMENT 3, 32ND CONGRESS, SPECIAL SESSION, 1852,
EXPLORATION AND SURVEY OF THE VALLEY OF THE GREAT SALT LAKE OF UTAH . . . BY HOWARD STANSBURY . . .

Stansbury's reconnaissance of the territory from Fort Laramie southwest to the Great Salt Lake is filled with colorful narrative, scientific observation, and beautiful illustration. In addition to many colorful full-page plates, two panoramic views fold out of the volume. Two very large and lavishly produced maps are also included.



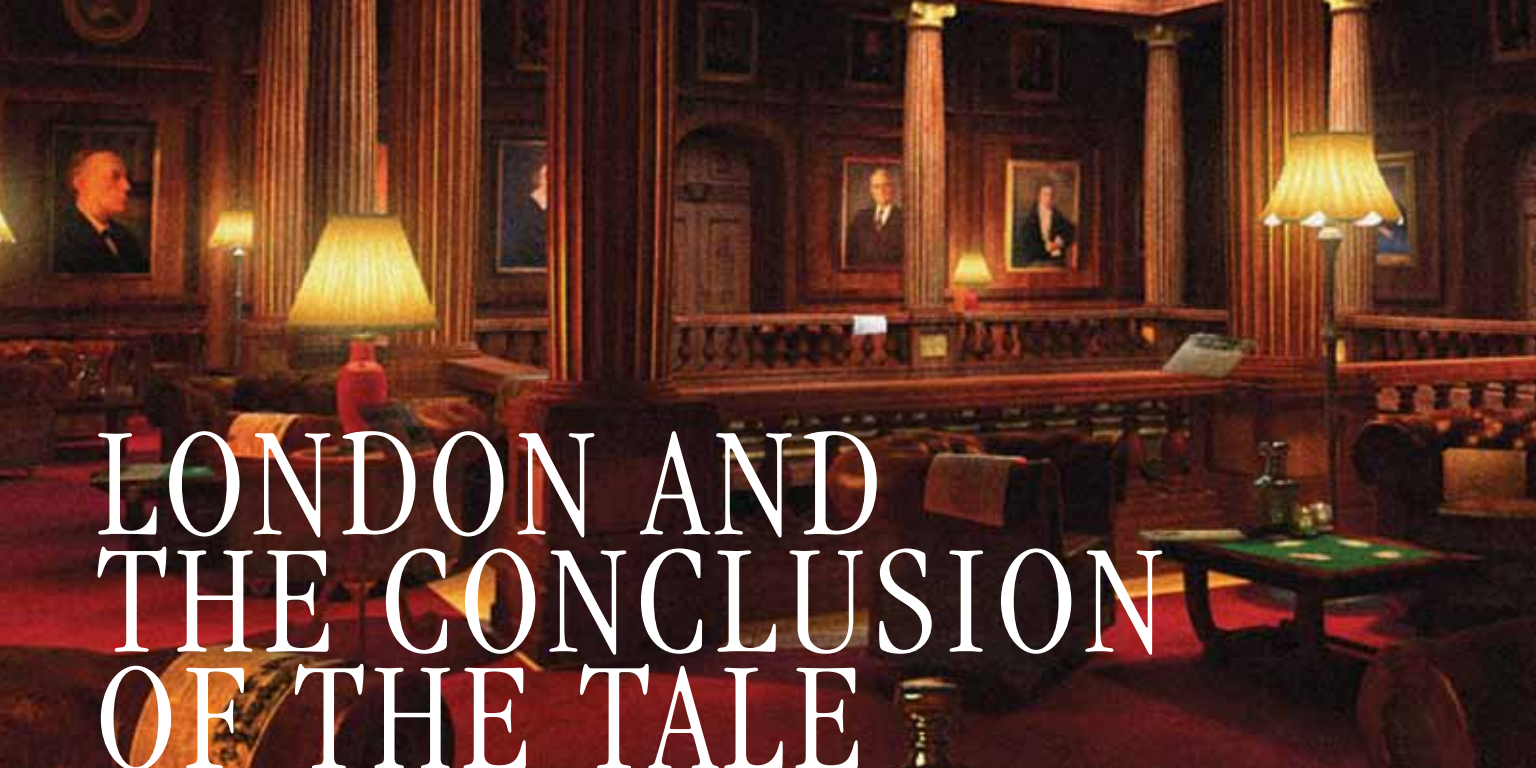
CHICAGO-NEW YORK

“How the adventure would finish, only time would tell. Nevertheless, Mrs. Aouda was constantly worried, although she said nothing.”

On reaching Chicago, the party moves quickly onward across the Midwest to New York and their last oceanic leg, but not before further complications that threaten Fogg's timetable.

SERIAL 1482
SENATE MISCELLANEOUS DOCUMENT 78 (42/2), 42ND CONGRESS
PETITION OF THE CITIZENS OF CHICAGO

Although Verne makes no mention of it, the great Chicago fire took place in 1871, just before the journey. This petition seeks passage of a bill to relax import duties on materials used in the rebuilding of the city.



LONDON AND THE CONCLUSION OF THE TALE

Our travelers reach London believing that the bet has been lost, but Fogg is found (by Passepartout’s watch) to have miscalculated (by ignoring having crossed the international dateline), and so appears at the Reform Club at the right moment, 80 days to the minute after his departure.

The Reform Club remains today much as it looked in Fogg’s time, although Verne never saw it, any more than any of the other locations he described.

THE WONDERS OF CONGRESSIONAL SERIAL SET

No historian, bibliographer, or librarian who has more than passing acquaintance with the vast U.S. Congressional Serial Set can fail to be somewhat awed by the depth and breadth of its scope. Far from being a dusty archive composed only of small type on yellowing paper, the set, especially in the second half of the 19th century, is a showcase of America’s expansion in the period and of the blossoming of printing technology of the same time.

In 1899, GPO’s first librarian, Adelaide R. Hasse, published a 90 page bibliography of “Reports of explorations printed in documents of the United States Government.” These explorations were international in scope and the majority of the several hundred reports listed were published in the Serial Set.

Many of these reports feature not only detailed narratives but illustrations in the form of engravings, engravings from photography, diagrams, charts, and maps with color added by hand.

U.S. interests and curiosity spread across the globe. Many reports focus on the expansion across our own continent, but many more are explorations of faraway lands and people. Probably the high points of both genre are represented in this display with the selected volume on the Pacific Railroad and the report of Perry’s China Seas and Japan expedition.

The historian Dee Brown has said that it “contains almost everything about the American experience . . . our wars, our peacetime works, our explorations and inventions . . . If we lost everything else in print except [these] documents, we would still have a splendid record and a memory of our past experience.”

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