

## Two Travel Compendiums with Compartments for Matches

By Neil Shapiro

The smart phone of 2023 has deep antecedents in the 19<sup>th</sup> century compendium used by travelers, scientists, and adventurers.

19<sup>th</sup> century travel often required bringing certain necessities with the traveler. So there were portable compendiums that had barometers, clocks, games, candles and some that had a compartment for matches that allowed the travelers to amuse, correspond and anticipate weather conditions.

As the smart phone allows users to check the weather, play games, generate light, get directions, and more, so did the compendium 150 years ago.

One of the most complicated and comprehensive compendiums was made by the Englishman, John Sheldon. According to his biographer, Brian George, "John Sheldon, (1808 [or 02]-1863) stands supreme amongst early nineteenth century manufacturers of writing equipment. His ingenuity, inventiveness and skill were outstanding, particularly in items for the traveler. This was epitomized in his **Unique Pocket Companion and Escritoir** which provided the traveler with pen, pencil, postal balance, toothpick, coin gauge, stamps, wax lights [matches] and seals. "Brian George: *Biography of John Sheldon for the Friends of Key Hill Cemetery*, Birmingham, June 2004.

Below is a description of an 1850 example of Sheldon's Escritoire:

The exterior is a tooled burgundy leather case with gilt lettering and the Royal Coat of Arms.

The interior lid has an applied Sheldon Escritoir Almanack for 1850. The fitted interior with folding inkstand and wax light (promethean) containers, a folding taper stick (and spare), a hinged central compartment with applied label containing sealing wax and a Sheldon's 12 inch measuring tape [missing] with plain and checkered seal, with further apertures for postage stamps, pens, gum or other wafer seals and a space for the original Sheldon's German Silver combined Dip Pen / sprung coin and letter scale [missing].

Sheldon described this pocket Writing Desk in his advertisements as ""The Cabinet of the Million and Wonder of the Age"". It contained all the essentials for writing and could be easily transported in a gentleman's pocket or a lady's handbag.

Sheldon registered the original design for the Patent Pocket Escritoir on 16th November 1843. Registered Design Number: 66. This example dates from 1850.

Another compendium was made and patented 11 July 1877 by A. Paetow in Berlin, Germany.

It is a rectangle, 3 1/4" x 1 1/4" x 1 5/8" with a carved horn cover and a plain horn back plate. Both front and rear plaques are held in place with tiny rivets. The carving is of a

large buck with a large set of antlers. Open one side with the front clasp and there is mechanism that pops up to provide a portable lantern. A lantern is a portable light with a handle and a window to protect the flame from the wind. This lantern has a place for a small candle, a compartment for matches and an isinglass window to protect it from the wind. Isinglass is a form of mica, which are any of various opaque or transparent minerals made from watery silicates of aluminum or potassium. The exterior striker, a roughened material, is on the side of the lantern. The interior striker is ridged metal near the storage area for the candle which is on the other side of the compendium and opens using the same push button.

In summary, compendiums containing writing instruments, candles, and matches were a practical and useful tool for 19th century travelers, providing them with essential items to document their journeys and navigate through unfamiliar territories, much like the 2023 smart phone.





Below: Image of Paetow's patent:

A. PAETOW IN BERLIN.  
 Zusammenlegbare Taschenlaterne.

Fig. 1.

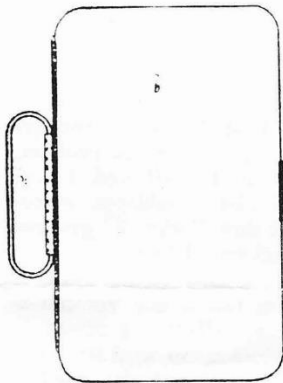


Fig. 2.

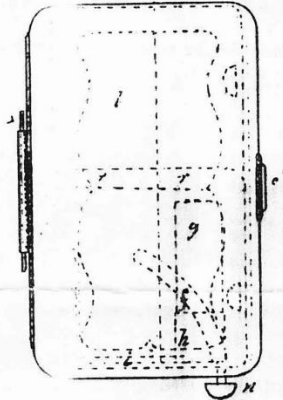


Fig. 3.



Fig. 4.

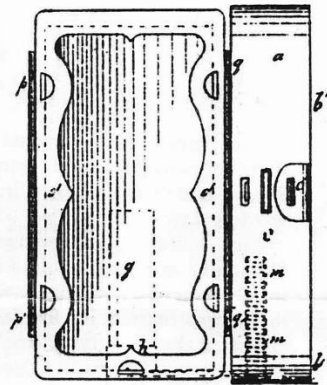


Fig. 5.

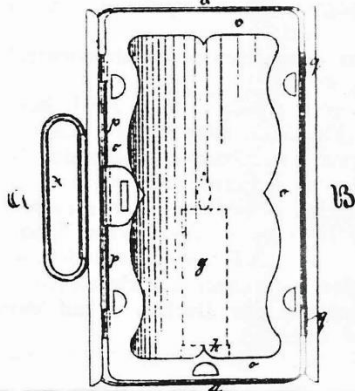


Fig. 6.

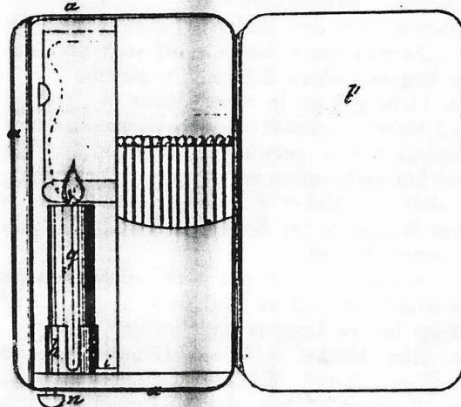


Fig. 7.

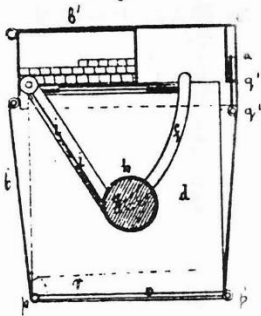
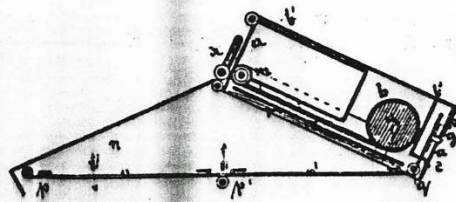


Fig. 8.



100 mm Zu der Patentschrift

N<sup>o</sup> 303.

PHOTOGR. DRUCK DER KÖNIGL. PREUSS. STAATSDRUCKEREI.

Sheldon's escrivoire:

