


The Registration of Marriage
of Ethel and Wilfrid Voynich

(From [Voynichiana](#): documents, images, and
research illuminating the lives of Wilfrid and Ethel Voynich and of
Anne M. Nill, Wilfrid Voynich's assistant and Ethel's life-long companion after
Voynich's death.)


The Registration of Marriage of Ethel and Wilfrid Voynich¹


 CERTIFIED COPY OF AN ENTRY OF MARRIAGE GIVEN AT THE GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE
 Application Number: B001603

19 <u>02</u> Marriage solemnized at <u>the Register Office</u> in the District of <u>St Giles</u> in the County of <u>London</u>								
No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father.
13	6th & 10th 1902	Wilfrid Michael Habdank-Woynicz Ethel Lilian Voynich	38 years 39 years	Bachelor Maiden	Analyst Chemist	20 Great Prince Street, Bloomsbury, London Moss Lane, Pinner	Leonard Antoni Fulgenci Habdank-Woynicz George Boole (deceased)	Barrister Professor of Mathematics
Married in the <u>Register Office</u> according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the ————— by <u>Vicars</u> before by me, This Marriage was solemnized between us, <u>Wilfrid Michael Habdank-Woynicz</u> and <u>Ethel Lilian Voynich</u> in the Presence of us, <u>Robert Steele</u> and <u>Frederick Reilly</u> <u>Emanuel A. Newbery</u> Registrar <u>James A. Hetherington</u> Superintendent Registrar								

CERTIFIED to be a true copy of an entry in the certified copy of a register of Marriages in the Registration District of St Giles
 Given at the GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE, under the Seal of the said Office, this 14th day of March 2001

This certificate is issued in pursuance of section 65 of the Marriage Act 1949. Subsection 3 of that section provides that any certified copy of an entry purporting to be sealed or stamped with the seal of the General Register Office shall be received as evidence of the marriage to which it relates without any further or other proof of the entry, and no certified copy purporting to have been given in the said Office shall be of any force or effect unless it is sealed or stamped as aforesaid.
 CAUTION: THERE ARE OFFENCES RELATING TO FALSIFYING OR ALTERING A CERTIFICATE AND USING OR POSSESSING A FALSE CERTIFICATE. ©CROWN COPYRIGHT
 WARNING: A CERTIFICATE IS NOT EVIDENCE OF IDENTITY.
Form MXA 5016 9/01/60 44M 10/00 5/81 (3/02/21)



The Voyniches were married on September 6, 1902, a Saturday, in the Register Office of the Civil Parish of St. Giles, South Bloomsbury, close to where they had been living as man and wife (see [The Voyniches in the 1901 Census of England and Wales](#)). The entry into the register of their marriage is filled out in one hand – probably that of the Registrar, Emanuel A. Newbery. Neither Wilfrid nor Ethel signed it. Voynich’s father’s name is listed as “Leonard Antoni Fulgenci[illegible] Habdank-Woynicz” and his profession as “Barrister.” Ethel’s father’s name is listed as “George Boole (deceased)” and his profession as “Professor of mathematics.”

The document raises numerous questions. For one, Ethel is named on it as “Ethel Lilian Voynich,” Wilfrid as “Wilfrid Michael Habdank-Woynicz.” What did the Registrar make of the similarity of their two last names? Particularly since Ethel’s father’s name was given on the document as “Boole.”

Why is Ethel’s residence listed on this certificate as “Moss Lane, Pinner”? Moss Lane, Pinner was the address of Frederick Reilly, one of the referees on Voynich’s naturalization papers (see [The Naturalization Papers of Wilfrid Voynich](#)). Did Ethel assume

¹ JPEG courtesy of Gerry Kennedy.

Reilly's address in order to look respectable? Did Reilly know she had done so? Or was she really living in Pinner at the time?

Voynich's profession is listed on the certificate as "analytical chemist." Why? By September 1902 he had been running his bookshop in Soho for years and doing very well at it. Furthermore, in the Census of 1901 (see above) he was listed as bookseller and bibliographer. Voynich did have a degree in pharmacy from the University of Moscow (see [The Voynich "Coat of Arms" and Michael Voynich's Flight from Siberia](#)), but we have no evidence that he ever practiced as a chemist in the U.K.

There is some reason to think the Voyniches were married as early as 1892. On August 28, 1892 Wilfrid wrote his friend Lazar Goldenberg in New York that he had just gotten married and had taken the pseudonym "Wilfrid Voynich."² (Goldenberg had known Voynich in London as "Ivan Kelchevsky.") In issues of *Free Russia* of 1892 and thereafter Ethel is listed on the masthead, among members of the General Committee of the Friends of Russian Freedom, as "Mrs. Wilfrid Voynich." In the 1890s Ethel brought out a number of books, including *The Gadfly* in 1897, under the name E.L. Voynich. Olive Garnett's³ diaries of 1893-95 (parts of which were edited by Barry C. Johnson and published in two volumes, *Tea and Anarchy!* and *Olive & Stepniak*⁴), mention Ethel a number of times, always as "Mrs. Voynich" and give no hint of scandal. Ethel's mother and such sisters as got married seem to have been conventionally married. Was Ethel different?

On the other hand, no record of any earlier marriage has turned up. Besides, if the Voyniches had been officially married before, why would they marry again? Since Ethel had an anticlerical streak in her as shown in *The Gadfly*, she might on principle have been against religious marriage at least, perhaps against civil as well. So in the summer of 1892 Ethel and Wilfrid may simply have declared themselves man and wife and begun living together.

If Ethel or Wilfrid objected to conventional marriage why then did they marry in 1902? In 1904 Voynich became a British national. Did the Voyniches believe an official record of marriage would strengthen his case in applying for citizenship? Or fear that if the authorities found out they were not legally married it would compromise his chances?

² Taratuta, Yevgenia, *Etel' Lilian Voynich, Sud'ba Picatela i Sud'ba Knigi*, Khudozhestvennaya Literatura, Moscow, 1964, p. 90.

³ Olive was the daughter of Richard Garnett, Keeper of Printed Books at the British Museum, and sister-in-law of Constance Garnett, the translator of Russian literary classics.

⁴ Bartlett's Press, Birmingham, 1989 and 1993, respectively.