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Mary Mahoney [00:00:00] How should we read a letter written to Walt Whitman in baby talk or a homemade magazine made by children in the 80s? What about a Kickapoo prayer stick or a receipt for a pig roast kept by an enslaved man in 18th century Newport, Rhode Island? These texts, some of them hidden away in archives or hiding in plain sight, can be difficult to read.

Mary Mahoney [00:00:20] This inspired professors Hilary Wyss and Christopher Hager at Trinity College to create Hidden Literacies, a free digital anthology that brings together leading scholars of historical literacy to investigate the surprising, often neglected roles reading and writing have played in the lives of marginalized Americans from indigenous and enslaved people to prisoners and young children. This companion podcast offers conversations with scholars on each of the contributed texts. We'll talk about how they became hidden in the first place, often due to the evolving priorities of archives.

Mary Mahoney [00:00:53] Archives are just these enormous collections of books and papers, and they kind of they keep getting reinvented over and over and over again by different generations of scholars. But it means that along the way, knowledge just gets lost or forgotten and it's our responsibility just to keep going in there and refining it, rediscovering it.

Mary Mahoney [00:01:14] Listeners can hear from scholars who rediscovered some of these texts and then read them themselves by exploring these letters, prayer sticks, receipts and other texts. The editors of Hidden Literacies and as contributors invite you to think with the idea of what kinds of knowledge gets hidden and how that affects what stories we tell.

Mary Mahoney [00:01:33] You know what parts of our history are we not willing to engage with because they don't quite tell the right kind of story and what then does that mean for how people understand who they are now?

Mary Mahoney [00:01:48] Subscribe to Hidden Literacies the podcast today.