Not much information¹ is readily available about Julius Friedrich Haasis’ life and work outside the scope of the collection housed at Winthrop University Archives which was in the keeping of two of his grandchildren, Cuthbert Wead “CW” Haasis and Eleanor Wead Haasis, whose papers form the bulk of the Winthrop collection bearing their name.

From these papers, primarily genealogical notes and bible records, plus a New York supreme court case about his estate (1888) and a few internet references, we know that Julius Haasis was born February 4, 1827 in Böblingen, [Kingdom of Baden-Württemberg], the son of Augustus Friedrich Haasis (February 28, 1786, Lichentenstern [Ba-Wü]–December 24, 1853, Stuttgart [Ba-Wü]) and his wife Christiane Frederike “Nanette” von Kraft Haasis (September 9, 1790 Karlsruhe, [Ba-Wü]–October 2, 1855 Maulbronn, [Ba-Wü]).

Interestingly, during his youth, he appears to have been involved with the establishment of the first modern Sporting Association in Heilbronn, German in 1845, headed by Wilhelm Pfänder, who would soon immigrate to New York in 1848 during the political unrest in the German states. We don’t know exactly when Julius immigrated to New York area, but on December 28, 1854 in Providence RI, he married Fanny Lenthall Jaeger (July 28, 1836, Stony Brook, NJ–@March 31, 1913, Brooklyn, NY), herself the daughter of a Viennese immigrant father and a old New York mother.

Brooklyn-based Julius Haasis was involved in printing and map making in Manhattan from at least 1858; he started a map-making and publishing business with his nephew, Charles Lubrecht before 1861, and in 1865 published the first German biography of the late President, Abraham Lincoln: sein Leben und seinen Öffentlichen Dienste².

However, the most interesting holding relating to J F Haasis in the Louise Pettus Archives is a small hand-written and hand-illustrated 40 page, hand-sewn codex, 6.25”x7.75”, which Haasis titled “Physik Heft” or Physics Notebook. Written almost entirely in German, with occasional jottings in French, English, Italian, Latin, and Greek, he methodically records observations and formulae dealing with the laws of the leverage of bodies, a branch of study made famous by Archimedes in the 3d century BCE: “Give me a place to stand and I will move the world”.

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¹ Yale University’s Sterling Library does appear to have a file on Julius Haasis ca. 1842 (contents not noted); Miscellaneous Manuscripts, MS 352, Series IV, Box 27, Folder 541 Julius Haasis

² being a translation of Phobe A. Hannaford’s English title, Abraham Lincoln: His Life and Public Services, translated by Julius Würzberger of the NY Staats-Zeitung newspaper
The writings in the Physik Heft, which are mostly in kurrentschrift (based on midiaeval German handwriting) move from studying and measuring the deceptively simple act of balance to more complex applications of leverage as used in crossbows, for instance--all of which are illustrated with pristine little drawings in pen and ink, some of which are hand-coloured (a skill he would use later in his work in New York) and appear to be based on locally observed activities in German-speaking Europe in the 1840s.

However, it is his doodles that are as interesting or even more so than the mathematical equations. On one page along with applications of simple kinds of leverage, including shears and a nutcracker, he also includes a domestic scene with a woman fetching in water while a dog sits by a parlour stove. Diagonally across from this, in a church (complete with be-ruched preacher in the high pulpit) a bell labeled “Concordia” is being rung -- to signal an announcement--again with the use of a lever, possibly reflecting the political turmoil in the German states in the 1840s. And across from this is a drawing, (perhaps drawn from life ?) of the future Alexander II of Russia, labeled “Alexander the Great”. It is known that Tsarevich Alexander Nicholaevich was in the German states and specifically in Vienna in 1839.

Perhaps the most intriguing drawing is one of a young bearded man clutching a violin in one hand and a bow in the other, labeled “Strauss auf eleganter Morgentoilette” (Strauss in elegant morning-array). It looks suspiciously like Johann Strauss II...could Julius Haasis have been on such intimate terms with “der Walzerkönig”-to-be? Or was this a cartoon of his brother, Josef Strauss who, while also a musician, was also training to be an engineer and inventor around this time at the Wiener Polytechnikum?

That Haasis had a deprecatory sense of humour as he is trying to find his feet in the adult world is evident in his writings; In one place he pens these verses in English: “I am an English Milord, very rich/You? You are a Jew./ I am, hear, I am/ Master____ _____ ____ Rothschild!!!” (Julius tastefuly left out the expletives). It is not known if Haasis is of Jewish origin; his children and grandchildren will all be baptized Episcopalians in the US. In another place Julius laments in German that he is “Julius by the Grace of God, Lord of the Colorless/King of Liliput/Count of Havenothing...” and displays his ‘seal’ a court jester as his “Royal Arms”. There is even a naughty drawing labeled as a ‘Chinese puzzleman” and several animated skeletons.

In conclusion, while some information about the dating and place of origin are currently unknown, some deductions can be made; that the notebook appears to be the work of a student, given the subject matter, not to mention the doodling of names and lettres of the alphabet in all kinds of different scripts, and that it was executed in Europe in the 1840s, given the dress of the subjects. Some clues point to it’s possible composition in Vienna or Heilbron (Baden-Württemberg), but further investigation, analysis and translation may needed to clear that up.

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