

The APHA Newsletter

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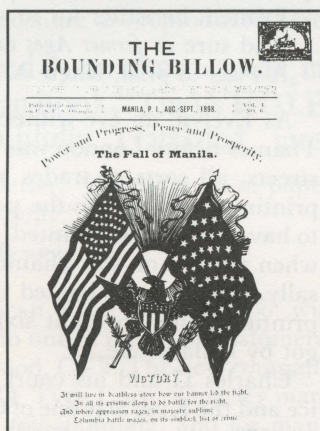
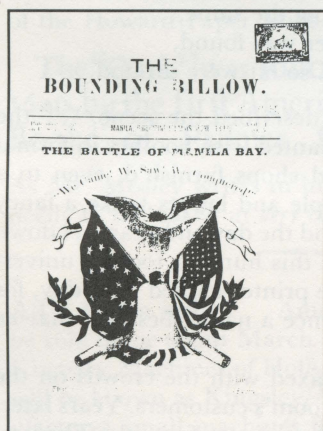
A Publication of the American Printing History Association

Stephen O. Saxe, Editor

The Unexpected Press

The printing press, for obvious reasons, has usually remained firmly fixed to a location in the printing office. But not always. For the sake of novelty, utility or necessity presses have found their way to a great many places where they might not be expected in the normal course of events. In this essay we will describe a few of the more interesting and unusual presses.

Printing on ships has a long history that continues to the present; in *Printing History* 12 (1984) Alexander Lawson described his adventures in printing on a platen press on board the battleship *New York* during World War II. In the window of a printing shop in the Philadelphia suburb of Haddonfield, N.J. a few years ago, I remember seeing a smallish Gordon platen jobber. A hand-lettered sign next to it announced that it was the press from Admiral Dewey's flagship, the U.S.F.S. *Olympia*, which had fought at the Battle of Manila Bay in 1898. The *Olympia* remains tied up at a pier in the Delaware River in Philadelphia. I later learned that when the press was about to be scrapped some years ago an enterprising local printer talked the dock workers into leaving the press on the pier, hidden by a large pile of trash and debris, where he later retrieved it for his shop window.



Author's collection

1898 issues of *The Bounding Billow*, printed on board U.S.F.S. *Olympia* at the Battle of Manila Bay

The press, like the flagship, did indeed see service at Manila Bay. In June through September, 1898, the ship's printer produced two issues of *The Bounding Billow* which described the Battle of Manila Bay and the fall of Manila. The 6 × 8½-inch newspaper was well printed, although on a motley of paper captured from the Spaniards which included ruled notebook paper. On page 16 of the issue de-

scribing the battle, a plan of the harbor was printed from a metal plate engraved by a seaman with a sailmaker's needle.

Another kind of printing in motion was described by Rollo Silver in *Printing History* 7/8: presses on floats in parades. Among the civic occasions he described were those celebrating the opening of the Erie Canal (1825) and the 400th anniversary of the invention of printing (1840).

Two of the earliest American printing demonstrations occurred in 1788 in Philadelphia and in New York, in honor of the adoption of the Federal Constitution. The Philadelphia procession took place on July 4th, when the town's artisans took part in a "Federal Procession of the Trades." Led by a 30-foot wooden Ship of State on a platform drawn by ten white horses, floats presented artisans and tradesmen at their work. The printers, stationers and bookbinders worked together on one float, printing and binding a keepsake booklet which was distributed to the crowd as the wagon made its progress.

The New York parade took place three weeks later. The event was described by Alexander Duer many years later:

Then came the members of the several professions and trades . . . mounted upon lofty and capacious stages, each drawn by several pairs of horses. The Coopers were setting up and hooping a huge cask emblematical of the Constitution . . . The Upholsterers were preparing the chair of State for the President . . . while the Printers were striking off and distributing patriotic songs and a programme of the ceremony.¹

Here, at least, were rare instances when printing could be watched with interest by the "man in the street." The presses were, of course, wooden common presses of the period. By the time of one of the processions mentioned by Rollo Silver, celebrating the laying of the Atlantic cable (New York, 1858), side by side with an old hand press was a new Hoe cylinder press, printing a short history of the telegraph as it moved along Broadway.²

These solemn or joyous occasions did not always go smoothly. During an 1890 parade in celebration of the admission to statehood of Idaho, the *North Idaho Star* ceased publication abruptly when its press fell off a float and was demolished.³

More stability, speed, and elegance was provided by the first railroad to travel from the Atlantic to the Pacific, in 1870. Along with eight Pullman cars especially built for the trip by George M. Pullman was a smoking car containing a printing office, complete with black walnut type cabinets and cases, and a smoking car containing a quarto-medium Gordon platen jobber. *En route* at 40 m.p.h. from Boston to San Francisco, four compositors and a pressmen printed copies of the daily *Trans-Continental*, in a 7 × 9¾-inch format.



"LET EVERY STEP BE AN ADVANCE."

VOL. I.

Niagara Falls, May 24, 1870.

No. 1.

Collection of Penny and Martin K. Speckter

Heading of the *Trans-Continental*, 1870

The newspaper was, as the editor wrote, as well-printed as any produced by "those of our brothers who have a local habitation." Datelines of the newspaper included Niagara Falls, Omaha, Cheyenne, Ogden, Salt Lake City, and San Francisco. On May 28th, outside Ogden, Utah, the Gordon press broke down after running off 150 copies of the *Trans-Continental*. The press was disassembled and the broken parts taken to the on-board machine shop. Thirty minutes later the damage was repaired and the run continued.⁴

Less elegant but even more enterprising was the 15-year old school drop-out who got a job as "candy butcher" on the train between Detroit and his home town of Port Huron, Michigan. About 1862 he invested some savings in a small hand press and 300 pounds of type and learned to print. He set up shop in the baggage car of the train and produced a small newspaper called *The Weekly Herald*, price eight cents, circulation 400. The enterprising lad was Thomas Alva Edison, and the story is recounted by Alexander Lawson in his *A Printer's Almanac*. Lawson credits Edison with being "the first person ever to print on a train."

The Weekly Herald was lively and informative, and with the help of a friend Edison enlarged it and renamed it the *Paul Pry*. Some of his prying may have gone too far, because Lawson tells of an irate reader who sought out the young editor and tossed him into the St. Clair River. Edison's interest in journalism cooled and he went on to become a telegraph operator.

Many of the earliest newspapers of the old West were printed on small iron hand presses, lightweight wooden-framed Ramage presses, and even on the small Army Presses that had seen service printing field dispatches for the army during the Civil War. The illustration reproduced here, from *Frank Leslie's Illustrated*, shows one of these small hand-



Printing in a railway coach, from *Leslie's Illustrated*

cranked cylinder proof presses, manufactured by the Cincinnati Type Foundry, in operation in the coach car of a moving train. At the right the compositor sets type from a case propped up on a railway seat, while across the aisle the pressman transfers type from a composing stick to the bed of the press.

Not all the unexpected presses were itinerant, however. Climbers who reached the summit of Mt. Washington, New Hampshire (6,288 ft. above sea level) between 1877 and 1918 might have been surprised to find an industrious printer running off copies of a small folio newspaper of six to eight pages. The publication, aptly named *Among the Clouds*, was published daily at the summit of the highest mountain in New England by Henry M. Burt. It was the first – and only – newspaper printed on a mountaintop, as far as I know. It contained a mixture of articles, ads for local hotels and railways, and illustrations.⁵

Another, more famous and venerable press was that of George Croom, a 17th century printer of Bride Lane, Fleet Street, London – a spot still known for its association with printing. Because of extremely cold weather (and probably aided by the arches of London Bridge which restricted the flow of water,) in 1684 the Thames froze solid. A Frost Fair was set up on the ice, described by John Evelyn as including bull-baiting, horse and coach races, puppet shows and fast-food stands. In the midst of this activity, Croom set up his hand press on the ice to print keepsakes for the crowd. Croom, whose usual products were broadsides and ballads, printed much the same material for the Fair. A broadside sheet for sale recently in a catalogue of bookseller W. Thomas Taylor of Austin, Texas, quotes from the keepsake:

... let us to the *Print-house* go

Where *Men* the *Art of Printing* soon do know;

Where, for a *Teaster* you may have your *Name*

Printed, hereafter for to show the same;

And sure in *former Ages* ne'er was found,

A *Press* to *print*, where *Men* so oft were dround.

As Evelyn, an eye-witness, described the scene, "...the Thames before London was planted with boothes in formal streets, all sorts of trades and shops furnish'd, even to a printing press, where the people and ladyes tooke a fancy to have their names printed, and the day and yeare set down when printed on the Thames: this humour took so universally, that 'twas estimated the printer gained £5 a day, for printing a line onely, at sixpence a name, besides what he got by ballads, &c."

Charles II and his court mixed with the crowds on the ice and the King was one of Croom's customers. Years later, in 1739 and again in 1814, severe frosts froze the Thames. Several printers, following Croom's example, set up their presses and continued the tradition of printing keepsakes, ballads, and broadsides on the ice. – Stephen O. Saxe

(Readers aware of other "unexpected presses" are invited to write the Editor, who may publish descriptions of them in a future issue.)

⁴Duer, Alexander. *New York As It Was During the Latter Part of the Century*. New York, 1849. ⁵Comparato, Frank E. *Chronicles of Genius and Folly*. Culver City, 1979.

⁶Karolevitz, Robert F. *Newspapering in the Old West*. Seattle, 1965. Steele. "W.R.", ed. *Trans-Continental*, Vol. 1, No. 1 – Vol. 1, No. 12. V.p., May 24, 1870 – July 4, 1870.

⁷Burt, Henry M., ed. *Among the Clouds*, Vol. 1, No. 1 – Vol. 35., No. 53. Mt. Washington, July 20, 1877 – Sept. 13, 1918.

EDITOR'S NOTES

The apparent discovery of the first printing in what is now the United States, as described in the last issue of the *Newsletter*, took on a new dimension February 4th when the owner, rare document dealer Mark W. Hofmann, was charged with two counts of first-degree murder. The 31-year old specialist in Mormon documents was also charged with two counts of delivery or placement of an infernal device, one count of construction or possession of an infernal device (i.e., a package bomb), 13 counts of theft by deception, and 10 counts of communications fraud. His ownership of the copy of *The Oath of a Freeman* could be said to fall short of the ideal provenance for an historic document. It is believed that the Salt Lake County Attorney acted after local experts came to the conclusion that many of the documents sold by Hofmann to the Mormon Church were forgeries.

In the article about the Oath I asked for comments on the possibility of accomplishing a forgery. A letter from James Mosley, director of the St. Bride Printing Library, London, is very much to the point. He enclosed a photocopy of a 1962 publicity mailing turned up by his colleague Nigel Roche at St. Bride. The mailing was sent out by Howard Paper Mills of Urbana, Ohio. It contains 32 lines of text "assembled entirely by hand from a facsimile edition of the 'Bay Psalm Book'—1640." The modern text was presumably pasted-up from photostats made from the facsimile of the Bay Psalm Book. In spite of a certain roughness, the result is quite acceptable, and certainly is an indication of the first step in producing a fake. Obtaining a blank flyleaf from one of the many tracts printed at the Cambridge press in the 17th century would be the next step. The most difficult would be fabrication of an ink that could escape detection by modern scientific tests. A few lines from the photocopy of the Howard Paper Mills brochure are reproduced here.

The "Oath" was followed by an almanac, and, in 1640, by the first American book, "The WHOLE Booke of Psalmes faithfully Translated into

As Mr. Mosley writes in his letter, "this little bit of paper needs to be looked at *very* carefully."

ATF to be sold American Type Founders Co. will be sold on or about March 1 to one of its major customers, Kingsley Machines of Hollywood, Calif. The new company will be known as Kingsley/ATF Type Corp. Kingsley manufactures small machines for foil-stamping, and for many years ATF has made the special heat- and pressure-resistant zinc type used for stamping. President of the new corporation will be Michael Rawson; George Gasparik, formerly head of ATF, will remain with the company. Full details will be in the next *Newsletter*.

Dust jackets The Library of Congress used to collect dust jackets, but has recently given up the effort and transferred 167,000 of them to the Rochester Institute of Technology, where they will be available "as a resource for students as well as scholars of typography, book design, the history of the book and popular culture."

The *APHA Newsletter* is published six times yearly by the American Printing History Association. All letters, news items and other material for the *Newsletter* should be sent directly to the Editor: Stephen O. Saxe, 1100 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10028. Subscriptions are through membership in APHA, and include all publications. Personal memberships for the calendar year are \$15; \$20 for U.S. institutions. Membership and other correspondence should be sent to APHA, P.O. Box 4922, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163. Copyright © 1986 by the American Printing History Association. All rights reserved.

APHA NEWS

APHA Awards to Wells, Columbia At the APHA Annual Meeting held in New York January 25th, the annual individual award "for distinguished contributions" to the field of printing history was presented to James M. Wells, Curator Emeritus of the John M. Wing Foundation of the Newberry Library, Chicago. Mr. Wells spoke of his 35 years with the Newberry. The APHA institutional award was given to Columbia University's School of Library Service and its Book Arts Press. Terry Belanger, Assistant Dean of the School and director of the Book Arts Press, accepted the award on behalf of the school.

New Officers of APHA John Hench, of the American Antiquarian Society, has been elected the new president of APHA. Vice presidents are Barbara Paulson of the Morgan Library (programs); Frederic C. Beil III (publications); Virginia Smith of Baruch College (membership). Secretary is Mrs. Allen T. Hazen, and Treasurer is Pat Taylor, retiring President. New Trustees are Alice Schreyer (Rutgers Library), Stephen Harvard (Stinehour Press), Jennifer Lee (Brown University Library), James Green (Library Company of Philadelphia), C. Deirdre Phelps (Boston University), and Francis Mattson (New York Public Library).

Lieberman Fund APHA has received about \$5000 in contributions for the fund in honor of its founder, Dr. J. Ben Lieberman. The money will support an annual lecture on some aspect of letterpress printing. The first program is to take place on November 6, 1986 at Mills College, Oakland, California. The well-known printer Claire van Vliet will be the speaker; in addition Mills College is arranging several days of programs related to letterpress printing. Further announcements about the program will appear in a later issue.

Membership, Publications, and Finances APHA's membership for 1985 was 1,200, including institutions. Although the exact figure fluctuates from year to year, this number has remained the average for some time. Treasurer Pat Taylor reported that APHA is running an annual deficit of about \$3,000 for the first time, due mainly to rising publication costs. The \$15 personal membership will remain in place for 1986 but it is expected that it will rise to \$20 next year. Publication of *Printing History* is close to being on schedule again and the *Newsletter* remains on schedule.

NOTES & QUERIES

Charles Antin (50 East 89th St., New York, NY 10028) asks for identification of the type reproduced here, which was

Some Copies of Verses Translated
Paraphrastically out of

used by the Golden Eagle Press, Mt. Vernon, NY, for an edition of *Anacreon* published without date.

Maggie Holtzberg (Dept. of Folklore and Folklife, 415 Logan Hall, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia PA 19104) is preparing a study on the occupational folklore of printers, especially compositors. She would appreciate hearing from craftsmen who made the transition from metal to photocomposition. In addition to those in the trade she would like to hear from family, acquaintances, and friends of such printers.

In February Miroslav Krek mounted an exhibition *From Xylography to Typography (A Millenium of Arabic Printing)* at Brandeis University. The exhibition included Arabic xylographs from tenth century Egypt, as well as later items. The exhibition was in commemoration of the five hundredth anniversary of the appearance of Arabic in a printed work.

A Bibliography of the Kelmscott Press by APHA member William S. Peterson (Clarendon Press, 1984) has been awarded the 1985 Besterman Medal, given annually by the (British) Library Association to the outstanding bibliography published in the United Kingdom.

For a book planned on the "Glint Ornaments," Michael Tarachow (Pentagram Press, Box 379, Markesan, WI 53946) seeks the address of the designer David Bethel, or comments he made in print about them. Bethel designed the Glint ornaments for the Monotype Corporation Ltd. in 1956.

TYPE & PRESSES

Equipment for sale Shirley J. Turnage, (3924 Sardis Road, Murrysville, PA; tel. 402-327-0141) has for sale the contents of a small amateur printing shop. Included are several fonts of type from about 1900, copper cuts, and a Baltimore No. 13 hand press.

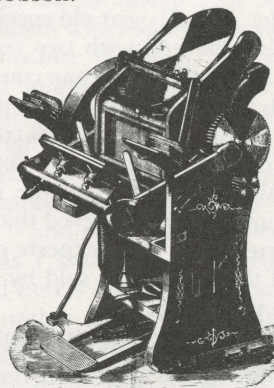
Michael Tarachow (Pentagram Press, Box 379, Markesan, WI 53946; tel. 414-398-2161) has for sale a 10 × 15 C&P with roller cores but no rollers and lacking a motor.

Walter J. Garde (9 Woodhaven Road, Parsippany, NJ 07054; tel. 201-335-1342) is selling several vintage presses including a 7 × 11 Improved Pearl, a Pilot table press, two small Kelseys, and a Poco Proof Press Model 0 (12 × 18). In addition he is selling galleys, litho stones, and over 125 fonts of wood type.

Sterling Type Foundry (P.O. Box 50234, Indianapolis, IN 46250) has a sheet of proofs of new cuts, ornaments and dingbats available – send a No. 10 SASE. Also available for \$2 (refundable with orders over \$20) is a 32-page catalogue showing over 2,500 typecast pieces.

Smithsonian Acquisitions The Smithsonian Institution, Division of Graphic Arts, has acquired three veteran jobbing platen presses from American Graphic Arts Inc. of

Elizabeth, NJ. The presses are a Kelsey "OK Jobber," patented 1886; a Colts Universal Press in the unusually small 7 × 11 platen size, patented 1886; and a Golding Official with the peculiar "pot-belly" base, circa 1877. American Graphic Arts, Inc. is a printing equipment company founded by the late Sid White, and is now operated by John Jacobson.



Editor's collection

Left, Kelsey OK Jobber, 1887; right, Golding Rotary Official, 1884

The New York Public Library again presents the **Pforzheimer Lectures** on *Printing and the Book Arts*, from April 2 to May 28. Speakers include J.M. Edelstein, Arthur A. Cohen, Colin Franklin, Hugh Ford, Bernard McTigue, Gunnar A. Kaldewey, and Lucien Goldschmidt. Lectures are \$2.50 each; send checks with SASE to Public Education Program, New York Public Library, Room M-6, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St., New York, NY 10018. For information call (212) 930-0855. ¶ The **Pforzheimer collection** of English books and manuscripts, the last great private collection of its sort, has been purchased for \$15 million by H. Ross Perot for donation to the University of Texas at Austin. The collection includes Caxton's first book, *The Recuyell of the Histories of Troye* (1473 or 1474); the only extant copy of Ben Jonson's *Every Man in His Humour* (1601); four folios of Shakespeare, and many other treasures. The University of Texas will publish several of them in facsimile. ¶ A **Christmas Eve fire** destroyed over half a million books at The Jenkins Company in Austin. Included in the loss were 15,000 volumes on Texas history. One of three remaining copies of the first printing of the United States Constitution (1787) escaped the fire. ¶ The **Australian Printing Historical Society** issued its first Newsletter in October. We will give details in the next issue; for information about membership (\$30 Australian) write A.P.H.S., P.O. Box 161, Pymont, N.S.W. 2009.

An overdue book Last December librarians at the Pennsylvania State Library found in their book collection bin a battered leather-bound copy of *Townsend's Collection*, published in 1657. The book was acquired for the library under Benjamin Franklin's direction and checked out some time between 1823 and 1900. "Often I sat up in my room reading the greatest part of the night, when the book was borrowed in the evening and to be returned early in the morning, lest it should be missed or wanted." Franklin, *Autobiography*.