

# The APHA Newsletter

May/June  
1986  
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A Publication of the American Printing History Association

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## Nineteenth Century Type Collections in America

The recent death of Tom Lyons (see p.11) and the sale of the Phillips Collection (*Newsletter* 70) focus attention on the changing status of the major collections of nineteenth century foundry and wood type in this country. As an introduction to that subject, let us first take a brief look at the surviving type of the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries.

Although America has no early and complete printing office comparable to the Plantin-Moretus Museum, there is extant more early type than one would imagine. The earliest type in America consists of a total of twelve letters and spaces from the first press, established under the management of Steven Daye in the precincts of Harvard College in Cambridge in 1639. In the course of 1979 excavations in Harvard Square for a subway station, these few pieces came to light. The types have been identified as being used no later than 1674; one of the letters matches type used in printing John Eliot's *The Indian Grammar* in 1666. Other 17th century type from the shop of William Nuthead has been excavated in Old St. Mary's City, Maryland. Nuthead was the first printer in Virginia and in Maryland, where he established his shop about 1689.

An abundance of type of the 18th century has been found in Annapolis, Maryland on the site of Jonas Green's shop. The thousands of pieces of type (as well as bookbinder's tools and engraved cuts) are being studied by Barbara Little. Jonas Green was the son of Timothy Green, and grandson of Samuel Green, both printers in Boston. Five generations of Greens were printers in the Colonies. Other 18th century type has been found at Ephrata, Pennsylvania – some of it perhaps cast there after 1772; at Williamsburg, Virginia; and some late 18th century type at Alexandria, Virginia, now at the Smithsonian Institution. It may have been cast at this country's first type foundry, Binny and Ronaldson of Philadelphia.

These are really relics and remnants of early shops rather than collections of type from many sources. It is not until the 1930s and 1940s that any effort was made to gather up early type. The best known is the collection of foundry and wood type made by Willard Morgan and his two sons, Lloyd and Douglas, which was sold in 1981 to the Smithsonian for \$250,000. Although I have shown the collection at 2500 fonts, that is conservative and the actual number might be as much as 3000. The collection was started in the 1940s, at a time when 19th century type was considered worthless by most printers; the Morgans roamed the countryside buying type wherever they found it. Wood type was often used for firewood, and the Morgans got a full truckload of wood

## Major Collections of Nineteenth Century Foundry and Wood Type in America

Collection & location	No. fonts foundry (approx.)	No. fonts wood (approx.)
Morgan/Smithsonian Institution Washington, DC	2500 +	700
T.J. Lyons, Boston, MA	2500	(260) <sup>1</sup>
Frederick Nelson Phillips/Tri Arts/ Bowne, New York, NY	1200 <sup>2</sup>	180
David Peat, Indianapolis, IN	750	200
Wm. & David Greer, Ridgefield, CT	700	450 <sup>3</sup>
Wm. O. Thorniley/West Coast Paper Co. Seattle, WA	665	
David Norton, Syracuse, NY	510	100
Lillian & Parker Worley, Haddonfield, NJ	500	100
David C. Churchman, Indianapolis, IN	450	100
Herb Harnish, Ft. Wayne, IN	400	100
Stephen O. Saxe, New York, NY	350	50
Wm. T. Allan, Keene, NH	265	70
Jane W. Roberts, Fitzwilliam, NH	175	
Elrie Robinson/Pforzheimer/SUNY Purchase, NY	160	
Martin & Penny Speckter, New York, NY	150	40
Wm. Maccoun, Vallejo, CA	115	150

1 Sold to David Greer

2 Bowne collection includes 155 additional fonts

3 Lyons wood type included

Based on a chart prepared by the author for *Specimen Book: Nineteenth Century Foundry & Wood Type*. NY: South Street Seaport Museum, 1985.

type that had once belonged to Elrie Robinson – the “Horse and Buggy Printer” of St. Francisville, Louisiana – for \$200. The noted printer and typefounder Paul Duensing, a friend of the Morgans, recalls that their house in Scarsdale, N.Y. was “like a storeroom for the British Museum; there was type stashed under the bathtub and in the closets, and the basement was jammed full of specially-made boxes of foundry type.”

Comparable in size is the collection of Thomas J. Lyons of Boston. His collection, which he used in his job printing shop, began in the 1930s and was a labor of love. “Each haul has its own little story,” he said. “Seven trips to Halifax, Nova Scotia, were necessary to separate one large printer from his real old material.” On another occasion he found a cache of old type under five tons of coal in Watertown, N.Y. during a snowy evening in 1935. Clutching 200 pounds of type to his chest, he slid down an icy hill, into the side of a house at the bottom and broke through the wooden cover to an underground garbage container. He never relaxed his hold on the type.



Although his collecting habits may seem more like sport than science, Lyons had two traits that are common to successful collectors: method and persistence. He pored over old foundry specimen books, and made lists of old printing offices in New England from which he planned itineraries in his car. The old type was stored in specially-made cardboard boxes. Larger sizes were used to make rubber plates from which he printed in his commercial job shop (which, by the way, is still very much in operation.) Thus the type was spared the wear of heavy use. His wood type collection was sold last year to David Greer of Connecticut. The foundry type was sold some years ago to the Compu-graphic Corp. for \$50,000. It was photographed for use on the Photo Typositor headline setter; most of the antique typefaces used commercially today in advertising, book jackets, and so forth, originated in the Lyons collection. Three years ago Compugraphic sold the collection back to him, and today it is part of his estate.

In the 1930s Tom Lyons discovered that there were others with the same interest in old type. Two of these became friends: Prof. Ray Abrams of Pennsylvania and Charlton Chute of Pennsylvania and Connecticut. The three type hunters made many forays into the New England, New York, and Pennsylvania countryside. When Ray Abrams died in 1983, he left eleven tons of antique type stored in the dusty basement of a Lutheran church in Philadelphia. The type was divided among six of his friends, of which I was privileged to be one. In fact, some of the headings which appear on these pages are from reprints of Ray Abrams' type.

Another type collector who became known to Tom Lyons in the 30s was Frederick Nelson Phillips of New York. Phillips, a commercial typographer, amassed a significant collection which became part of his establishment. He used it, as did the Morgans, to sell reproduction proofs to advertisers with a need for the ornate or picturesque. Phillips and his son collected about 1,200 fonts of metal type. His firm eventually became Tri-Arts Press, Inc., and when that firm went out of business the collection was bought by Bowne & Co., Stationers. It is now available for use in Bowne's 19th-century printing shop at New York's South Street Seaport Museum.

All the collections started as the obsession of one person; some eventually became part of institutional holdings. One such collection that has moved from place to place is the Elrie Robinson collection. The collection was used by Robinson, a commercial printer of St. Francisville, Louisiana, and eventually purchased and given to the New York Public Library by Robinson's friend, Carl Pforzheimer. When the library got rid of its in-house letterpress shop, the collection was "de-accessioned" (a horrid word in every sense) to the State University of New York at Purchase. There, we hope it is to stay.

Most of the other collections on the list are still in the hands of their gatherers, where they are sorted, catalogued, cleaned, gloated over, and sometimes used for printing. Some have even gone to the great effort of publishing, for their own use and that of friends, specimen books showing their typefaces. These include the Bill Thorniley, Herb Harnish, and Jane Roberts. The Roberts collection, incidentally, is unusual in that it is mostly type from a single shop of the 1880s in rural Connecticut. Her specimen book is a gem of careful research and completely appropriate printing.



Pages from the Tri-Arts catalogue of the Phillips collection and the Bowne collection specimen book.

A few of the commercially-used collections issued specimen books, which are listed below. Most of them are out of print. They are fascinating reminders of the cycles of taste — these are types designed with french curves, not with straight edges. As one studies these specimens, the 19th-century types begin to separate themselves into the early classic period, the mid-century novelty and ornamented period, and the end-of-century decadent period.

Even more than by looking at the images of these types, a sense of the inventiveness and expansiveness of the nineteenth century can be gained by actually handling the pieces of metal. No wonder old type has become important to those who collect it.

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### Type Collection Specimen Books

*Horse & Buggy Printing.* St. Francisville, 1939. Wrappers, 59 leaves, including cuts & type. Elrie Robinson collection. Type is displayed, identified, attributed to foundries. Out of print.

*Horse & Buggy Types.* St. Francisville, 1950. Casebound, 19 pp., Elrie Robinson collection. Types displayed & identified. Out of print.

*Old Type Faces at Tri-Arts Press, Inc.* N.Y., 1971. Wrappers, 74 pp., Frederick Nelson Phillips collection. About 1000 faces displayed & identified. Available at \$6.75 from Stephen O. Saxe, 1100 Madison Ave., New York, NY 10028. (NY res. add tax.)

*Phillips Old-Fashioned Type Book.* NY, 1945. Large 4to, casebound, 252 pp. About 1000 faces from the Frederick Nelson Phillips collection displayed & identified. Out of print.

*Specimen Book: Nineteenth Century Foundry and Wood Type in the Collection of Bowne & Co., Stationers.* NY, 1985. Marbled boards, leather spine, 125 pp. About 155 fonts of metal type and 180 of wood type in the Bowne collection (Phillips collection not included). Type is displayed, identified, dated, and attributed when possible to designer and foundry. Limited edition of 250 printed by hand; available at \$53.00 from Bowne & Co., Stationers, South St. Seaport Museum, 207 Front St., New York, NY 10038. (NY res. add tax.)

*Types of the Morgan Press.* Scarsdale, n.d. (ca. 1955). Boards with plastic comb binding, 88 pp. About 700 antique faces displayed & identified; many with dates, foundries, and designers' names. Recently gone out of print.

*Typograph: A Compilation of Nineteenth Century Type Faces, Borders and Ornaments.* Boston, 1958. T.J. Lyons collection. Loose sheets, 70 pp., with faces displayed, identified, and dated approximately. Out of print.



## EDITOR'S NOTES

The bizarre and fascinating story of Mark Hofmann will be known in more detail when his trial for murder and fraud opens in September. We have only two items to add now. In March *American Book Collector* reported that the highly respected manuscript dealer Kenneth Rendell has identified sections of a first-century A.D. Book of the Dead that he sold Hofmann in September as part of one of the Mormon documents sold by Hofmann to a Salt Lake City collector. It appears that Hofmann cut up the early mss. to create a fake Mormon document. The other item bears directly on the *Oath of a Freeman*. On Dec. 21, 1985, the *Salt Lake Tribune* reported that "Shannon Patrick Flynn [a 27-year old friend and associate of Hofmann] however, said Friday that Mr. Hofmann claimed he found two copies of the oath . . . The Tribune Friday contacted Dickson D. 'Duke' Cowley . . . who said that he and another Arizona man were approached in September by Mr. Hofmann and Mr. Flynn, who represented that they were in possession of a second copy of the oath and wanted Mr. Cowley and co-investor Wilford Cardon to buy a 30% interest in that document for \$175,000." The existence of more than one copy of the Freeman's Oath in Hofmann's hands would add greatly to the doubts about the document. We look forward to the trial.

Letterpress printers were interested to hear of the sale of American Type Founders, reported in the last issue. Since then I have spoken to Michael Rawson, the new president, who says that the company will continue to supply printing type, and in fact intends to make the company's type more accessible to professionals and amateurs. This is good news and we are happy to see the company, whose roots go back to America's first foundry in 1796, continue. However, whatever the company's new name may be, we intend to continue calling it ATF, as it has been known since 1892.

## OBITUARIES

**Arnold Bank** Internationally-known calligrapher, designer and teacher Arnold Bank died February 16th in Pittsburgh at the age of 77. He was art director of *Time* from 1941 to 1947, and taught lettering, layout, and typography at Pratt Institute, Cooper Union, and other New York schools. A Senior Fulbright scholarship took him to London, where he taught at the Royal College of Art for several years. In 1960 he joined the faculty of Carnegie-Mellon University, becoming professor of Graphic Arts in 1976. He retired last year.

**Thomas J. Lyons** A job printer who gained a wide reputation for his use of 19th century type, T. J. Lyons died March 21st in Boston at the age of 92. He combined the operation of a job shop from 1924 until his death with a passion for antique type. He travelled the Northeast searching for it, eventually amassing 2500 fonts which filled every spare inch of his 60-foot long by 20-foot wide shop. He said his interest in type began at the age of nine and he never lost his "love for that wonderful smell of ink." His shop printed everything, but lavished special attention on period typography for jobs as diverse as Durgin Park restaurant menus and Harvard honorary degrees.

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

The 11th Annual APHA Conference is scheduled to take place at Columbia University on September 27th. The theme is "The Printing Surface." Speakers will discuss the materials from which printed impressions are taken, including woodblocks, copperplates, lithographic stones, and other surfaces. The speakers will include Roderick Stinehour, the esteemed printer of our journal; Clifford Harvey (University of West Virginia) on 19th century commercial woodblocks; David Pankow (R.I.T.) on 20th century processes; and two additional speakers not yet announced. Registration will remain at \$25 for APHA members and \$30 for others; members will receive full information and forms in due time.

In honor of Doc Leslie's recent 100th birthday, bookseller Ruth Lew (Battery Park Book Co.) has given reprint copies of two books for sale for the benefit of APHA. The books are: DeVinne's 1883 *Manual of Printing Office Practice*, with an introduction by McMurtrie, cloth, 52 pp., and Ralph Willett's 1820 *Memoir on the Origin of Printing*, cloth, 72 pp. They are available at \$11 a copy ppd., all proceeds for the benefit of APHA, from The Typophiles, Inc., 140 Lincoln Road, Brooklyn, NY 11225. New York State residents please add 83¢ sales tax.



This previously unpublished photograph of the Cincinnati Type Foundry, ca. 1880, was sent to us by APHA member Harold Sterne of Cincinnati. The foundry was at this spot, 201 Vine Street, from 1868 until the end of the century. We would be happy to hear of similar foundry photographs.



## TYPE & PRESSES

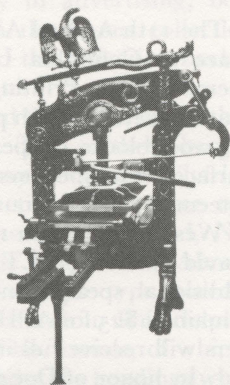
**Equipment for sale** Adelaide Whitesett (1309 Bitner Terrace, Pittsburg, KS 66762) is selling her late husband's 10 x 15 new series Chandler & Price platen press, in fine condition. Ken Whitesett was an early member of the Typophiles.

Anita Howard (271-20 77th Ave., New Hyde Park, NY 11040, tel. 718-343-7045) has for sale a 10 x 15 Chandler & Price press, a 24-case cabinet, and type, reglet, furniture and galley cabinets, all in excellent condition.

Grace Grote (Freeman Lane, Denville, NJ 07834, tel. 201-627-5741) is selling 4 stands of type in cases plus two small table presses: an 1880s Model Press and a 1920s Kelsey Excelsior.

An 1874 Columbian press has been donated to RIT in memory of the late Sid White by the company he founded, American Graphic Arts of Elizabeth, NJ. The press, a 23 x 34 made by Powell of London, is part of the Cary Collection and will be used by students. Powell is a maker not listed in the 1969 check-list in the *Journal of the Printing Historical Society*.

*Printing Machines of Yesterday* (10 The Business Centre, Colne Way, Watford WD2 4ND, England) is a new company selling antique hand-presses. In their current stock are Columbians, Imperials, and Albions. Among the Albions are a very early one dated 1822 and another made by Cope in 1827 with the rare counter-weight instead of the usual springs. Only six are known.



## NOTES & QUERIES

The strange Greek-looking type in the last issue was identified by two members, Thomas Pacl and Mac McGrew. They noted that it was a mixture of Greek characters, some inverted, with roman lowercase and small caps. Mr. McGrew, a leading authority on 20th-century metal type, further zeroed in, noting that the type was 11 point Linotype Greek Elzevir and the roman either Intertype Garamond or Linotype Garamond No. 3.

For a doctoral thesis, Theodore Lustig is writing on *Social Impacts in the U.S. Resulting from the Mechanization of the Printing Press*. He seeks sources indicating major social, economic, and political changes resulting from the mass production of books and newspapers. Write Theodore Lustig, 21 The Fairway, Montclair, NJ 07043.

The U.S. Government Printing Office celebrated its 150th anniversary in March with ceremonies and speeches. A 2½" commemorative medallion has been struck in bronze depicting the GPO and its past and present presses. It is available for \$27 postpaid from Cafe Card & Gift Shop, Government Printing Office Cafeteria, 732 North Capitol St., NW, Washington, DC 20401.

Letterpress printers will be glad to hear of the return of *The Printer*, an informal monthly with lots of classified

ads of type and equipment. Subscription for a year is \$5 from Michael J. Phillips, 337 Wilson St., Findlay, OH 45840. Make checks payable to M.J. Phillips.

**Linotype centennial.** On July 3, 1886 the first use of the Linotype to compose a newspaper took place at the Tribune building in New York. This year, on the evening of June 2nd, at the South Street Seaport Museum a few blocks away from that site, there will be a commemoration of the event which will include the showing of the acclaimed documentary movie *Farewell etain shrdlu* by APHA member Carl Schlesinger. For details call 212-669-9400. This *Newsletter* will describe the history of the Linotype later this year.

*The Trump Card of the Small Printer*, a pamphlet based on a speech by Beatrice Warde, has been made available by the British Printing Society. It is available (while supply lasts) for \$4.50 postpaid from Victor A. Moitoret, 3812 Tom Lyons Dr., Silver City, New Mexico 80601.

The 1986 Rare Book School of the Columbia University School of Library Service will run from June 16 to July 25. Courses on a wide range of subjects will be given by a galaxy of book arts superstars. For a brochure and application form write Columbia University School of Library Service, 516 Butler Library, New York, NY 10027, or tel. 212-280-2292.

## OMNIVUM GATHERUM

**Rudolph Ruzicka** The Grolier Club has published *Rudolph Ruzicka: Speaking Reminiscently*, edited by Edward Connery Lathem and printed by Meriden-Stinehour. Ruzicka, one of America's great graphic artists, had a career that spanned eight decades. In the book he describes his part in many noteworthy projects. The book is available from The Grolier Club, 47 East 60th St., New York, NY 10022 at \$40 to members, \$55 to others, plus \$2.50 for shipping. NY residents add sales tax.

**Videotapes** Two new videotapes on aspects of the book arts are available. *Pen-Ruling: A Vanishing Industrial Craft* shows the use of an oak and metal ruling machine in a 15-minute tape. ¾" tape is \$75. ½" is \$50 plus \$2 postage. Specify ¾", VHS, or Betamat. Orders: Mirror Productions, 335 Greenwich St. #7B, New York, NY 10013, attn. P. Seigel. (Tel. 212-925-7760.)

Also available is *From Punch to Printing Type: The Art and Craft of Hand Punchcutting and Typecasting*. This 45-minute videotape features the Smithsonian's Stan Nelson, the leading expert in this field, cutting punches, fitting matrices, and casting type. The tape was produced by Book Arts Productions, School of Library Service, Columbia University, 516 Butler Library, New York, NY 10027 and is available from them at \$250.

**Blumenthal award** Joseph Blumenthal, noted printer and proprietor of The Spiral Press, received the first award for excellence given by the Center for Editions at the State University of New York at Purchase. Mr. Blumenthal, who won the APHA Annual Award in 1978, is the author of three major books: *Arts of the Printed Book* (1973), *The Printed Book in America* (1977), and *Typographic Years* (1982.)

**Princeton exhibition** An exhibition of *European Graphic Arts: The Art of the Book from Gutenberg to Picasso* will inaugurate the new Milberg Gallery for the Graphic Arts at Princeton University Library. Treasures of the arts of the book will be on display from May 11 through July 20.