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The Forgotten 19th Century Type Designers

Frederic Goudy designed over 116 typefaces, a remarkable record by America's most celebrated type designer. Forty years after his death, his name is still widely known – indeed it is often part of the names of his perennially popular typefaces. But how many know the name of Herman Ihlenburg, the most prolific designer of type in America in the nineteenth century?

The men who worked for America's type foundries were known in trade circles but otherwise remained anonymous. They were the inheritors of a system of apprenticeship and artisanship that had its roots in earlier centuries. They were often content to remain with one company for an entire lifetime. For the most part they did not think of themselves as designers but rather as interpreters.

It would be a mistake to lump all nineteenth century typefaces together and label them as excessive or overblown. There were good and bad designs in every period, and more to the point, changing times meant changing tastes. In the earlier part of the century decorated types were usually based on classic letterforms that were elaborated upon – shadowed, rimmed, shaded, outlined, etc. The great variety of elaborations are thoroughly described and documented in Nicolette Grey's superb book, *Nineteenth Century Ornamented Typefaces* (Berkeley & Los Angeles, 1976.)

As the century progressed more and more possibilities were explored. In wood type variety became possible through the use of the pantograph and router together, using pattern letters. In metal type, designers soon learned that instead of laboriously cutting steel punches, they could cut their designs in soft type metal and then electroplate them. Type designs became more and more fanciful. Near the end of the century the letterforms themselves were distorted rather than used merely as the foundation for ornamentation. This led to some genuinely dreadful faces, and was followed by a general typographical reform begun by William Morris, which produced many attractive unembellished faces.

The point is only that types from the "classic" period – 1820 to about 1860 – are quite different from types of the 1890s.

Near the end of the nineteenth century William E. Loy began a series of 28 articles in *The Inland Printer* called "Designers and Engravers of Type." With many of the men he

wrote about still alive or well remembered, his series in effect rescued them from obscurity. In his opening article in 1898 he described the reasons for attempting the series:

"Machinery is fast changing what were once called art and artisanship into trades, and occupations which formerly depended exclusively on the skill and cunning dexterity of the individual – the handicrafts of our fathers – are likely to become traditions . . . It is hoped that the publication from month to month may awaken an interest in the subject . . . the purpose being to put on record, before it is too late, such facts about these men to whom type founders and printers alike are deeply indebted. . ."

What were the accomplishments of these men? It would be impossible in this brief space to do them the barest justice, so instead I will mention some representative names.

24 Minster MINSTER

24 GLYPHIC SH

Twenty Seven Phidian AaCcDdFiHhKkM

24 ARBORET

A random sampling of typefaces by Herman Ihlenburg: *Minster* (1878), *Glyptic Shaded* (1878), *Phidian* (1870), and *Arboret* (1885). The column heading "APHA News" is set in his *Byzantine* (1868) and "Briefly Noted" is set in his *Fillet* (1890).

HERMAN IHLENBURG was certainly the most talented, as well as the most prolific of the group. He was born in Berlin in 1843 and served an apprenticeship in the type foundry of Trowitzsch & Son in his native city. After stints with Haase & Sons foundry in Prague, Bohemia, and Flinsch in Frankfurt, Battenburg in Paris and Haase in Basle, he emigrated to the United States.

He joined the L. Johnson & Co. foundry in Philadelphia in 1866, and with the exception of a year with the Bruce foundry in New York, there he remained. L. Johnson & Co. became MacKellar, Smiths & Jordan in 1868 and became the major part of American Type Founders' Company when the foundries merged in 1892. Ihlenburg remained at his desk there and was still designing typefaces as late as 1900. By 1898, when Loy wrote, he had already cut over 32,000 punches for over 80 display faces. By the end of his career (about 1900) he had probably become Fred Goudy's nearest rival in the number of faces designed.

Ihlenburg designed many of the most inventive of the display faces of the second half of the century. A glance at the specimen book of the Photo Typositor system will show at least a dozen of his faces still in everyday use for advertising. Some of the faces available on present systems include *Columbus*, *Phidian*, *Ringlet*, *Nymphic*, *Crayon*, *Bijou*, *Houghton*, and *Centennial Script*. In his own day some of the most popular were *Byzantine*, *Arboret*, *Obelisk*, *Oxonian*, *Stipple*, and *Columbian*.

Admittedly the extravagance of nineteenth century type designs displease some. I am not one of these. There is an excitement and unbounded optimism in these designs, taken as a whole, that corresponds with this country's expansion westward and the rise of its commerce. These advertising faces were meant to attract attention, and they did. They still do. Herman Ihlenburg's types included many of the very best. As Loy wrote, he produced "very many of the most famous and best selling ornamented styles of type . . . and while the greater number are now [1898] seldom used, many of them are staples."

JOHN F. CUMMING was born in 1852 in Pennsylvania. After his schooling, Cumming drifted around the midwest for several years. He finally went to work for engraving companies in St. Louis and Chicago. In St. Louis he became friendly with the manager of the Central Type Foundry. Central was originally a branch of, and later the owner of the Boston Type Foundry. When Cumming went to Boston in 1881, he was able to obtain a job at the Boston foundry. In 1884 he moved to the Dickinson Type Foundry, also in Boston, and produced highly ornate faces like *Kismet*, *Karnac*, *Renaissant*, *Quaint* and *Algonquin*. By this time the Morris reforms had reached America, and Cumming engraved the matrices for *Jenson Old Style* (Morris' *Golden Type*) and *Satanick* (Morris' *Troy*.) He cut the punches for Bruce Rogers' classic face *Montaigne* in 1901.

12 QUAIN FOR ONE COLOR
24 Kismet ❖ KISMET
30 Satanic SATHA

Above, some faces by John F. Cummings: *Quaint* (1888), *Kismet* (1886) and *Satanick* (ca. 1896).

DAVID BRUCE, JR. is better remembered for inventing the first successful typesetting machine than for his work as a type designer, but he had a long career in that occupation. As Loy wrote, he is "probably the most interesting figure in the history of type founding in America."

He was born in New York in 1802 and practically grew up in Bruce's New-York Type Foundry, established in 1813 by his father and uncle. There he learned every branch of the typesetting business — mould making, punch cutting, matrix fitting, casting and dressing. He cut many of the foundry's fonts in the 1820s. Some of his first work in the days before wood type was manufactured was the cutting of brass matrices for the casting of large type from five to fifteen lines pica.

He worked in various foundries until 1834, when his work in developing the typesetting machine caused him to withdraw to his father's farm in New Jersey. His 1836 patent was sold to his uncle George Bruce, but his improved 1838 machine was declined and made its debut at the Boston Type and Stereotype Foundry, after which it spread throughout the world.

In 1846 he established his own foundry and had eight of his own casting machines running, casting type from matrices made by punches he had cut himself.

Loy has written, "It is known that many of the romans, italics, two-line letters and titles made by the Bruce foundry during its long and honorable career were designed and cut by him." Among the display faces he designed are *Secretary*, *Madisonian* and *Hancock Script*, *Rimmed Shade*, and *Ionic*.

David Bruce Jr., also deserves credit for being the first historian of typesetting in America. From 1858 to 1867, at a time when no one paid much attention to the craft, he wrote extensively for *The Printer* on the history and art of type founding. He also wrote often and usually anonymously for other trade publications, such as James Conner's *Sons foundry periodical*, *Typographic Messenger*.

The late Dr. James Eckman edited his *History of Typesetting in the United States*, which was published by The Typophiles in 1981. For those interested in the early years of typesetting in this country, it is invaluable, since many of the founders were his friends and contemporaries. David Bruce, Jr. died in 1892 at the age of 90.

Some of the early designers and engravers of type in the Loy series were obscure figures even when he wrote, but men whose work was of the highest importance. One was Samuel Sawyer Kilburn, who was born in 1799 and died in 1864. Loy writes that "he cut all the various roman, italic, title, and two-line letters produced by the Boston Type Foundry in the early years of its career." Here we have a man almost unknown today, who was the designer and cutter of type for one of the earliest foundries in this country.

The Loy series is hardly complete — among the designers and engravers left out are the eccentric George Buxton Lothian, who cut most of the types for Harper Brothers; George Bruce, owner of the foundry and creator of the celebrated *Penman Script* series, and David Wolfe Bruce, his son. But the series provides the only information we have about many designers and punchcutters. We may apply to William E. Loy the words he wrote about David Bruce, Jr., that future readers would "thank him for the facts recorded by him."

Books on nineteenth century type design and production

Bruce, David Jr. *History of Typesetting in the United States*. Edited and annotated by James Eckman. New York, 1981. (Far more satisfactory than the edition published in New York by Douglas McMurtrie, 1925.)

Grey, Nicolette. *Nineteenth Century Ornamented Typefaces*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1976.

Reed, Talbot Baines. *A History of the Old English Letter Foundries*. Revised and enlarged by A.F. Johnson. London, 1952.

Silver, Rollo G. *Typesetting in America, 1787-1825*. Charlottesville, 1965.

APHA NEWS

At the APHA Annual Meeting on January 30, the following were elected Officers and Trustees of APHA:

President: James N. Green

Vice-President, Publications: Jeffrey Kaimowitz

Vice-President, Programs: John Lancaster

Vice-President, Membership: Edward Colker

Treasurer: E.H. Pat Taylor

Treasurer: Michael Hentges

Trustee (to 1991): Barbara Paulson

Martin Hutner

Calvin Otto

Trustee (to 1990): Virginia Smith

President's Report APHA's outgoing President, John B. Hench, made his report for 1987 at the Annual Meeting. Some of the highlights:

– 1987 was a year of consolidation. Many of the projects started in previous years have been brought to, or near, completion.

– APHA has become a more truly national organization through the Lieberman Lectures. The 1987 lecture was held at Mills College, Oakland, California; the 1986 lecture was at the Lilly Library of Indiana University; and the next one will be held at Colonial Williamsburg in Virginia. In addition the Annual Conference this year will be held in Philadelphia and next year in Cambridge.

– The council of the American Historical Association unanimously approved APHA's request for affiliated society status within AHA. The American Historical Association is the principal professional organization and learned society for historians in the United States.

– We incurred an operating deficit attributable mainly to higher than anticipated expenses.

– One of those added expenses has been the start of a new paid position, Executive Secretary. However, the Executive Secretary has the potential to save APHA money in the area of membership maintenance fees, new member dues, and advertising revenues. We do not anticipate a deficit to recur in 1988. In any case, the position was necessary to the proper functioning of the organization.

– Special thanks are due to Pat Taylor, former chairman, president and treasurer, who continues as treasurer. Pat has acted as de facto Executive Secretary for the past two years.

All members of APHA add their thanks to John Hench for his services as president for the last two years, and to the other outgoing Officers and Trustees.

1988 Annual Awards A good crowd gathered at the Trustees' Room of the New York Public Library on January 30 to attend the presentation of our annual awards. Edwin Wolf 2nd, of The Library Company of Philadelphia, accepted his Individual Award with a witty talk on why fine old antique bookcases always seem to be filled with export porcelain, or almost anything but books. The Institutional Award was accepted on behalf of the Kemble Collections

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on Printing of the California Historical Society by G. Thomas Tanselle. He read a talk sent by Glenn Humphreys, who is currently in Germany, on the history and scope of the Kemble Collections.

1988 Conference Now is the time to make plans to attend the APHA Annual Conference. It will take place in Philadelphia on Saturday, September 24, starting at 9:30, at the Library Company of Philadelphia. This is the first Conference to be held outside of New York City. It is a recognition of the fact that APHA is a national organization as well as the importance of the very ambitious exhibition, "Legacies of Genius."

The conference subject is "The Book Arts in Philadelphia, 1785-1840." The speakers will be:

Edwin Wolf 2nd, Librarian Emeritus, the Library Company, on Philadelphia fine printing

Elizabeth Harris, Curator of Graphic Arts, Smithsonian Institution, on Philadelphia press manufacturers

William Spawn, Curator of Bindings, Bryn Mawr College Library, on Philadelphia bookbinders

Jennifer Lee, Curator of Printed Books, John Hay Library, Brown University, on Philadelphia type-founders

Kenneth Finkel, Curator of Prints, the Library Company, on Philadelphia printmaking

The talks will cover the profound changes that took place in printing and publishing during the period. "Legacies of Genius" will be exhibited at the Library Company and the adjacent Historical Society of Pennsylvania. It is an exhibition of the 250 most significant rare books from the collections of the 16-member Philadelphia Area Consortium of Special Collections Libraries. There will be a special exhibition of artists' books at the University of the Arts to inaugurate its book arts program.

Rooms have been reserved for APHA attendees at the nearby Holiday Inn Center City at 1314 Walnut Street. Further details will be in a registration brochure to be mailed to APHA members about the first of June.

1989 Conference The 1989 Annual Conference will commemorate the beginning of printing in what is now the United States, 350 years ago. It is entirely fitting, therefore, that the conference will take place in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where it all began. Currently under consideration are locations at Harvard's Boylston or Emerson Halls, each only a stone's throw from the location of the site of Stephen Daye's printing office.

NOTES & QUERIES

Maxey Mayo (1440 S. Hiway 121, #8, Lewisville, TX 75067) seeks information about music printing in America from ca. 1850, including image creation (typography, engraving, lithography), the printing processes and the names of music printers.

OBITUARIES

Adrian Wilson The noted American typographic designer Adrian Wilson died February 3 in San Francisco of congestive heart failure at the age of 64. Mr. Wilson was well known for his work as a book designer and for his *The Design of Books*, published in 1967. He is also noted for his *The Making of the Nuremberg Chronicle* (1976) which used the layout sketches for the book discovered by Mr. Wilson to describe the process by which the 1492 book was planned and produced. He was the recipient of the MacArthur Award, given to "exceptionally talented individuals," in 1983. Mr. Wilson, an APHA member, is survived by his wife, Joyce, and a daughter, Melissa Wilson Marshall.

BRIEFLY NOTED

A seminar on the Technology of the Medieval Book will be held June 19th through July 2 in Santa, Idaho, about an hour's drive from Spokane, Washington. The seminar will be conducted by Jack C. Thompson and James R. Croft. Participants will make parchment, paper, thread, cord and boards, and make use of each. For details write to Jack C. Thompson, Thompson Conservation Laboratory, 7549 N. Fenwick, Portland, OR 97217 or call 503-248-0046.

The International Working Group on Printing History held its sixth conference from Oct. 1 through 4 in West Berlin. Talks included "Newspaper production in the 18th century" by Dr. Martin Welke, Director of the German Newspaper Museum in Meersburg/Bodensee. It was followed by a talk on newspaper production from 1870-1914 by Reinald Shröder, University of Stuttgart. Other papers included the beginning of paper production in Europe by Dr. Günter Bayerl, University of Hamburg. Roger Münch of the Museum of Technology and Labor in Mannheim took the chair for a discussion on an information system for printing history and technology. James Mosley of St. Bride Printing Library, London, emphasized international cooperation in that field and submitted his paper "Typefounding materials - a list of locations" to the members. The next meeting is scheduled for September, 1988 in London.

The South Street Seaport Museum, New York, is now presenting an exhibition *Wood Engraving: Art and Industry* at the A.A. Low Building, through May. The exhibition features the work of Alexander Anderson, the first American wood engraver. Daily demonstrations of printing wood en-

gravings on the hand press are presented. On April 12, Jane Pomeroy will give a special lecture, "Alexander Anderson: Master of Wood Engraving, Master of Variety." Jane Pomeroy recently discovered and acquired over 200 of Anderson's boxwood blocks. Further information from South Street Seaport Museum, 207 Front St., New York, NY 10038; tel. 212-669-9430.

BOOKS

Carl Schlesinger is now accepting reservations for his forthcoming book on Ottmar Mergenthaler and the Linotype. The hardcover, limited edition will reprint Mergenthaler's scarce 1898 *Biography*. "In his research Stephen Saxe discovered a handwritten note on the flyleaf of a copy which shows that the work is really the inventor's autobiography. Now it will be clear why the opinions and grievances expressed in the 'biography' are so strongly put: they are the great inventor's own version of the historic events which he himself put into motion."

The book will contain articles about the early Linotype operators, a study of the first Linotype printing, and a theory about the unique matrices used. The Foreword is by Dr. Wolfgang Kummer, president of worldwide Linotype AG, and the Introduction is by Elizabeth Harris, curator of the Division of Graphic Arts, National Museum of American History.

Copies may be reserved by sending a check for \$26 made out to "Mergenthaler Book Reserve" to Carl Schlesinger, 39 Myrtle St., Rutherford, NJ 07070.

The Landscape Alphabet. With an introduction by Michael Twyman. Hurtwood Press, Westerham Hill, England, 1987. 8"x8," hardbound, [52]pp.

This slim and attractive volume contains a single alphabet. Each letter - one to a page - is about four inches square, and consists of a "picturesque" scene from nature or romantic architectural elements. It is a reprint of a ca. 1831 book lithographed in London by Charles Hullmandel, an English pioneer in the new art, a man who raised it to a high level of technical excellence. A review of the book in *The Literary Gazette* is quoted in full, and is right on the mark: "It is impossible to deny the ingenuity and taste of these elegant trifles."

Michael Twyman, a noted authority on early lithography and author of several books and articles on the subject, has contributed a 24-page introduction that effectively explains the early days of lithography in England, the techniques and processes, and the people. It is a scholarly but readable essay which describes, explains, and analyses the "elegant trifles" which follow.

The book is available from Hurtwood Press' American representative, Patricia Hayes, 200 West 16th St., New York, NY 10011. Hurtwood Press specializes in books on the graphic arts; two of its other publications are James Moran's *Fit to be Styled a Typographer* and Robert Harling's *The Letter Forms and Type Designs of Eric Gill*.