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# The APHA Newsletter

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Stephen O. Saxe, Editor

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## Printing Historians of America's Past

The four men whose lives are briefly sketched here, although from diverse backgrounds and eras, had much in common. None attended college. The educations of three ended at the age of fourteen, and one at the age of seven. All were apprenticed to the printing trade, and it is in the printing trade that they educated themselves. All made great contributions to the understanding of the history of printing, and three of them founded important institutions that remain powerful influences to this day.

### Isaiah Thomas



Isaiah Thomas was born in Boston in 1749. At seven he was indentured to a Boston printer, Zechariah Fowle. Although he could not spell and needed an 18-inch platform to stand on to reach the case, the seven-year-old boy soon became proficient. Thomas learned his trade from Fowle's partner, Samuel Draper. In 1766, he ran away from Fowle and went to work for the government printer in Halifax. Anti-stamp tax sentiments he placed in the newspaper he printed and wrote forced him to leave Nova Scotia. After working briefly in the South, he returned to Boston in 1770, and in that year issued the *Massachusetts Spy*, an outspokenly revolutionary journal. His legal difficulties with the colonial authorities added to his popularity with his readers. When hostilities broke out he moved his press to Worcester where the British could not reach him, and continued to publish throughout the war.

After 1781 his printing business grew rapidly. He built his own paper mill and established a bindery. His business

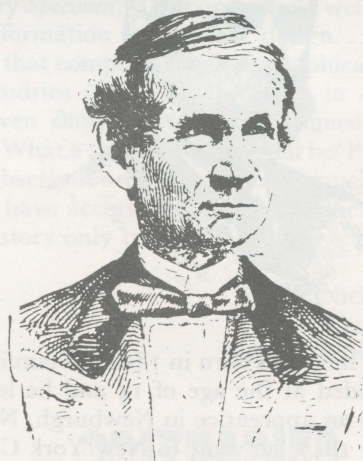
reached every part of the Union, and at one time he had 16 presses in operation under his full or partial control, and five bookstores.

In 1802 Thomas relinquished his business to his son and began his collection of books and newspapers. He began work on his *History of Printing in America*, which was issued in two volumes from his press in Worcester in 1810. In 1812, his efforts led to the founding of the American Antiquarian Association, the third historical society in the country and the first that was national in scope, of which he was the first president. The AAS is today the largest repository of material printed in British North America before 1820, and is especially strong in material before 1876.

Isaiah Thomas continued to make notes for the second edition of his *History of Printing*, but was not able to issue it before his death in 1831.

Reference: Skipton, C.K. *Isaiah Thomas*. Rochester, N.Y. 1948.

### Joel Munsell



Joel Munsell was born in Northfield, Mass. in 1808. Although he was an assiduous student, his schooling ended at the age of 14. In 1825 he was apprenticed to a newspaper printer and became foreman the following year. In 1827 his current employer moved to Albany to establish a bookstore, and Munsell accompanied him as general assistant. Six months later he returned to printing and did a variety of work including publishing his own newspaper. He studied eagerly and in 1836 began a job printing office from which he issued a series of pamphlets. His first work as an author was an *Outline History of Printing*; this was succeeded in 1850 by *Typographical Miscellany*. His *Annals of Albany* in 10 volumes and *History of Albany* in four volumes show his antiquarian



zeal. His *Chronology of Paper and Paper-Making* is an important contribution, and saw five editions.

In 1874 Munsell edited and printed the second edition of Isaiah Thomas's *History of Printing in America*. This edition contained extensive notes supplied by Munsell among others. A third edition (1970), edited and with additional notes by Marcus McCorison of the American Antiquarian Society, followed the text of the Munsell edition.

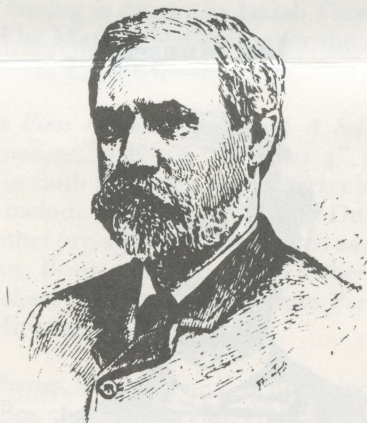
Munsell was a reader and collector of books relating to typography and printing. In his capacity as a bookseller he issued catalogues. One of them, *Catalogue of Books on Printing and the Kindred Arts*, issued in 1868, offered (among many others), the following:

Bodoni. *Manuale Typographico*. Parma, 1818. \$20  
 Fournier. *Manuel Typographique*. Paris, 1764. \$10  
 Koops, Mathias. *Historical account*. . . London, 1801. \$5  
 Moxon. *Mechanick Exercises*. London, 1677. \$25  
 Ronaldson. *Specimen of Printing Type*. Phila., 1822. \$5  
 Van Winkle. *Printers Guide*. NY, 1818. \$2.50

Over a thousand of his typographical books were purchased by the New York State Library. Munsell died in 1880.

Reference: Edelstein, David S. *Joel Munsell: Printer and Antiquarian*. New York, 1950.

### Theodore Low DeVinne



Theodore DeVinne was born in 1828 in Stamford, Conn. His schooling ended at the age of 14 and he learned the printing trade as an apprentice in Newburgh, N.Y. beginning in 1843. In 1847, he went to New York City, where he worked at the press and at the case. Two years later he heard of an opening at the office of Francis Hart, a leading printer for railroads and steamboat companies, and he became a job compositor. By 1850 he was foreman there, a position he held for nine years. When Hart feared losing DeVinne, he was made a member of the firm.

In 1861, DeVinne, who was an eager student of printing history in his spare time, began to write on the subject for an early journal, *The Printer*. After the Civil War he was instrumental in forming the Typothetae. In 1873, Francis Hart & Co. began to print *St. Nicholas* and *Century Magazine*, and DeVinne was able for the first time to print periodicals on dry paper (although previously much fine book work was done on dry paper.)

When Francis Hart died in 1877, DeVinne took over the firm, which became Theodore L. DeVinne & Co. In 1885, the firm moved into a spacious new building on Lafayette St., which is still standing.

DeVinne's research had led him to be dissatisfied with the errors committed by bibliographers who knew nothing of the actual practice of typefounding and printing. Drawing on his own experience and research, in 1876, he published *The Invention of Printing*, a work that is still a great value. Other publications of importance include many type specimen books of the Bruce foundry in New York, which he wrote and edited with material on the history of printing, and *The Practice of Typography* in four volumes.

In 1884, DeVinne was among the founders of the Grolier Club in New York, an institution devoted to the art of printing which continues to flourish to this day. He died in 1912.

Reference: Rollins, Carl Purlington. *Theodore Low DeVinne*. New York, 1968.

### Henry Lewis Bullen



Henry Bullen was born at Ballarat, Australia in 1857. He was apprenticed to a printer at 14, and after completing his training he set sail for New York. For the next five years he worked as a tramp printer, moving from city to city across the United States. Eventually he returned East and became editor of promotional advertising for Golding & Co., printing press and equipment manufacturers in Boston. He eventually became sales manager of the firm, and in later years claimed to have saved the company from economic difficulties. During his time with Golding he patented the first composing stick marked off in picas — something not possible until the agreement on a standard pica by the typefounders to the United States in 1883.

He returned to Australia for four years in 1888, and came back to New York in 1892. In that year American Type Founders' Co. was formed by 23 of the leading American foundries, and Bullen was hired as assistant manager of the New York branch.

For some time Bullen had been writing for trade publications like *The Inland Printer*. In one article he suggested, anonymously, the establishment of a library and museum



of printing. The article attracted the attention of the head of ATF, Robert W. Nelson. Using Nelson's authority to commandeer the libraries of the former independent foundries, Bullen was able to assemble the nucleus of the Typographic Library and Museum of the American Type Founders' Co.

In future years his writings in *Inland Printer* made him well known. Among his contributions are the series *Discussions of a Retired Printer* and *Collectanea Typoegraphica*.

In 1901 he left ATF for other employment, got into a financial scrape which put him into jail for a period, and eventually returned to ATF in 1908. He volunteered to be the unpaid librarian for the ATF Library and Museum, working nights and weekends. During the next 25 years he advertised for all kinds of typographic material, and was able to add many collections to his library, including that of the Typothetae and of the DeVinne Press.

The Library was placed on deposit at Columbia University until the university purchased it in 1941. It remains the greatest typographical collection in the Western Hemisphere, rivaling that of St. Bride, London. It includes the largest collection of American type specimen books anywhere; the first issue of Caslon's first type specimen; the Canon Missae; and countless other treasures.

Bullen was a tireless writer and promoter of printing history and education; the collection he almost single-handedly built is an enduring monument to his lifelong passion. He died in New York in 1938.

Reference: Mallison, David W. *Henry Lewis Bullen and the Typographic Library and Museum of the American Type Founders*. New York, 1976. Doctoral dissertation, available from University Microfilms, Ann Arbor, MI.

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## NOTES & QUERIES

To the Editor:

... I must take exception to your statement about "Fred Goudy's nearest rival in the number of faces designed." Goudy is credited with 116, but if we eliminate the ones that were never completed as full fonts or alphabets, the number is more like 92. However, Morris Benton designed 218, not counting uncompleted projects. (Some say he had a large staff to do "all the work" for him, but an ATF insider insists he did all the actual designing.) Ludlow's Bob Middleton did 99, by my count, and Sol Hess followed with 83...

Mac McGrew  
Pittsburgh

[Mr. McGrew is the author of *American Metal Typefaces of the Twentieth Century* and the recognized authority on the subject. --Ed.]

The Division of Historic Sites, Illinois Historic Preservation Agency, seeks information on the use of 19th century handbills in Public buildings (i.e. the old Illinois State Capitol building.) Information regarding their display, distribution, use and locations of posting is requested. The Division also seek information on the type of mechanism commonly used in 1840-1860 to stamp or emboss state seals.

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 \$20; \$25 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 © 1988 by the American Printing History Association. All rights reserved.

Contact Marianna Munyer, Curator of Collections, Illinois Historic Preservation Agency, Old State Capitol, Springfield IL 62701.

John B. Graybill (1324 Valley Road, Lancaster, PA 17603) is conducting a study of John Baer (and John Baer's Sons) Printing Company of Lancaster, Pennsylvania. For the first half of the 19th century the Baers were the principal printers for the Pennsylvania Germans of Lancaster County, publishing Bibles, hymnbooks, a well-known Farmer's Almanac, a newspaper in German, etc. Any information on the family, press or their printed products would be appreciated.

To the Editor:

Thank you for the essay on "forgotten 19th century type designers" in the *APHA Newsletter*. . . Do you suppose that APHA would be interested in reprinting the Loy articles in *Inland Printer* which you cite? The British Printing Historical Society regularly does this sort of thing as a member service (e.g. the *Fry Specimen*). I, for one, would welcome easy access to such information on typeface design. . . I'd welcome an anthology that compiled Loy's biographical series, sketches of the foundries (some of which are in Annenberg) and perhaps even showings of faces designed by each of the designers. What a treasure that would be! Perhaps you could call for subscription pledges before launching the project. Few of us have access to a full run of the *Inland Printer*, so your lead story only tantalizes . . .

Nicholas Westbrook  
Curator of Exhibits  
Minnesota Historical Society

## OBITUARIES

Friends and colleagues of Stephen Harvard were shocked and saddened to hear of his death in late July. Mr. Harvard, who was 41, was a well-known book designer with a strong interest in the history of calligraphy and the book arts. He was vice-president of Stinehour Press, Lunenburg, VT, the printer of APHA's *Printing History*. Mr. Harvard had been reported missing while hiking in the White Mountains of New Hampshire. He was the subject of a week-long air and ground search that ended when his body was found on July 30. The cause of death was not known, according to the accounts we have received so far. The members and officers of APHA extend their condolences to his family.



## BOOKS

Clement, Walter & Ian Robertson. *Alphabets & Others. A Wood Type Album.* 46 pp., 7-3/8" x 17-1/4". Softbound, \$28 ppd.; hardbound, \$35 ppd. from The Slow Loris Press, 117 Kiefer Ave., Fairhope Alabama 36532

*Alphabets & Others* is an unexpected treasure that we came upon almost by accident, since it has been issued in a small edition of 125 copies and has not been widely advertised. It is a book of 22 19th century wood type alphabets printed letterpress in a variety of colors. These are very attractive wood type letters, impeccably printed on a surprising variety of different presses, ranging from a wooden handpress to a Washington handpress to a Kluge. There is a mixture of sheet sizes but the overall format is a very wide landscape sheet that will pose some problems for shelving.

In addition to the superb printing of the alphabets, there is also an excellent short introduction, brief bibliography, and a pocket holding wood type broadsides. The prices asked are very low for this quality of work, and anyone interested had better order very quickly.

Carl V. Johnson (1136 West Wayland Drive, Oak Creek WI 53154) has for sale the 4-volume set, *The History of Printing from Its Beginnings to 1930*, the subject catalogue of the American Type Founders Library collected by Henry Bullen. \$350 postage paid. Also for sale by Mr. Johnson, *The History of Printing in America* by Isaiah Thomas, 1-volume edition edited by Marcus McCorison for the American Antiquarian Society, \$50 postpaid.

*The Pentagram Press Commonplace Book; A Selection of Typographic Interpretations.* 44 pp., 9-7/8" x 6-1/4", limited to 150 copies bound in cloth (\$90) and 26 in quarter leather (\$175). Contributors include Leonard Bahr, Paul Duensing, Harry Duncan and other press proprietors, as well as Bruce Rogers, W.A. Dwiggins, Beatrice Warde, etc. Further details or orders from Michael Tarachow, Pentagram Press, 212 North Second St., Minneapolis, MN 55401.

*Two Private Presses.* From Henry Schniewind's *The Four Winds Press*, Box 365, Locust Valley, NY 11560. The history of *The Four Winds Press* and its neighbor, Morris Gelfand's *Stone House Press*. Limited to 200 copies, 160 for sale at \$60.

The Book Club of Texas, originally founded in 1929, has been revived and is accepting members. Annual dues are \$35 to The Book Club of Texas, Box 160871, Austin, TX 78716. Among the first books to be offered from Texas presses is *Glorious News! An Enquiry into the Nature of Certain Nineteenth Century Texas Broadside*s by W. Thomas Taylor, describing a series of forged Texas broadsides uncovered by Mr. Taylor. [Aiding in the unmasking were some American type specimen books which showed that some of the types used in the broadsides did not exist before 1896, long after the battle of San Jacinto which they described.]

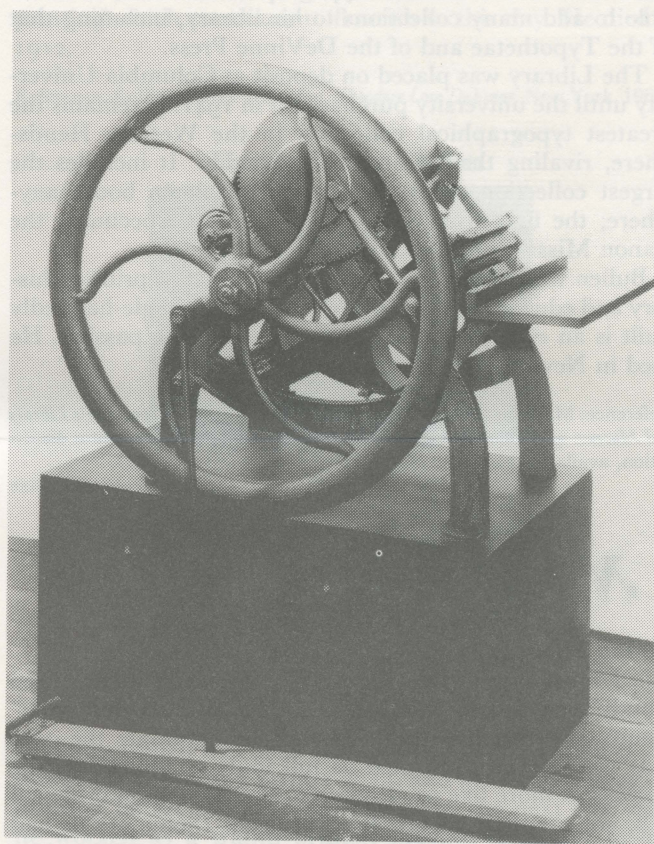
*Tamerlane*, Edgar Allan Poe's first book (Boston, 1827) was sold for \$198,000 at Sotheby's in New York on June 7. This copy, mentioned in *Newsletter 82*, had been purchased

in a New Hampshire bookshop for \$15. *Fine Print*, the private press publication, is preparing a report on the types used in title page, and your Editor is pleased to be assisting. Additional details in a future issue.

## ▲SURVIVALS▲

(In this space, from time to time, we will present photographs of unique survivals of printing presses, type, and other historic printing materials. Readers are invited to write the Editor if they have or know of suitable items for publication.)

### Ruggles Card and Bill Head Press of 1851



This Ruggles press seems to be the only known surviving Ruggles printing press. It is on view at the Hall of Graphic Arts at the Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of American History, Washington D.C.

The press is original, but the wooden treadle (and the mounting box) have been supplied by the Smithsonian. The press has a chase of 4-1/2" x 7", and a curved inking plate. (The rotating circular disk was not yet in use.) According to Ralph Green, "this was the first real treadle jobber to be regularly manufactured that looked like any of its long list of successors of later years." It was the first platen jobber with a vertical bed, the platen hinged below its lower edge, and so constructed that the sheet to be printed could be placed right on the platen and *not* on a movable tympan.

Ruggles was granted a patent for this press on January 1, 1851. It is believed to have been quite successful.