

The APHA Newsletter

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Stephen O. Saxe, Editor

Forged Historic Documents Uncovered in Texas

This article is based on information in a speech given last September by W. Thomas Taylor, an APHA member, rare book dealer, printer and publisher in Austin. Mr. Taylor is working on a book dealing with faked Texas documents.

It is a fact of life that success breeds imitation. When auction rooms constantly record ever higher prices for paintings, one can be sure that clever forgeries of similar works will be offered to the unwary. The same is true of any object in which a large store of value is found; the result is faked art, currency, furniture, antiques, autographs and printed documents. The recent case of Mark Hofmann, who faked countless Mormon documents and *The Oath of a Freeman*, is the most spectacular modern example, but recently Tom Taylor of Texas has unearthed more forgeries, and there can be little doubt that much, much more lies undetected.

Bill Holman, a printer friend of Tom Taylor, mentioned to him that he had just compared two copies of the Texas Declaration of Independence (1836). One was at the University of Texas in Austin and the other was from a collector in Dallas. When he laid one document atop the other, he noticed that the dimensions of the type areas were signifi-

cantly different. He suspected that there was something fishy about the collector's copy.

Tom Taylor knew that he was about to open a Pandora's Box. Reluctantly, he knew he had to proceed. He drove around the state examining Texas documents. He examined every extant piece of printing by the three printers at work in Texas in March, 1836. His first focus was the Texas Declaration of Independence.

He found that in 1955 Thomas Streeter's great *Bibliography* had recorded five copies. Taylor had already located at least 20. They soon could be divided into two groups: those with early provenances, well-printed and with a common type area dimension; and those with no provenance before 1970, poorly printed, with weak and fuzzy letter forms, and a shared type area measurement that differed from the first group's. It seemed likely that if the first group was genuine, the second was not. One joker appeared in the deck, however: A Declaration that was well-printed, with clear letter forms, but with type measurements that matched the dubious copies.

Aided by his editor and proof reader Jill Mason, Taylor began a detailed analysis of the suspected copy. Jill Mason noticed that in certain areas of the document the letterforms were distorted — too large, too small, or otherwise not shaped correctly. Taylor found that the distorted letters formed a distinct pattern, running in straight lines horizontally and vertically. A glance at the "joker" copy owned by

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Right, an enlarged section of the Texas Declaration of Independence, photographed from an original in the collection of Paul

Burns. *Left*, the same section from the fake produced from the Burns copy. Photographs courtesy W. Thomas Taylor.

Paul Burns — with the unusual type area dimensions but clear print — revealed the reason: horizontal and vertical folds in the same places that were distorted in the dubious copy. The only conclusion was that someone had photographed the genuine but atypical Burns copy, enlarged the negative to touch up the broken letters in the folds, reduced it back to its original size to make a zinc or copper letterpress printing plate, and finally printed it on a piece of old paper.

A comparison of enlarged photographs of the good Burns copy and the fake is informative. The Burns copy shows a Modern typeface, probably based on Bodoni, that was in vogue in the 1830s. The type is sharp, with few signs of wear, and was probably nearly new. The Burns broadside is well printed, as Tom Taylor found true of the authentic copies, with almost all letters complete and no signs of under-inking or of over-inking and consequent "squeeze" — ink being forced outside of the outline of the piece of type, resulting in distorted and oversized type images.

Comparing this copy with the fake is an eye-opening experience, even apart from the matter of retouching in the folds. The type in the derivative copy is so badly reproduced that it has lost most of the machine-like regularity that is in the original. The degradation of the image has given some serifs brackets where there were none, and has diminished others. There is hardly a sharp line anywhere, and almost every letter is badly formed. This degradation of the original image can occur at several stages:

- 1) The copy negative, no matter how sharp, will not be as sharp as the printed original;
- 2) The zinc or copper engraving made from the above negative will further degrade the original;
- 3) If the photoengraver were given a positive made from the original negative, rather than the negative, he would have to make his own negative, resulting in further degradation;
- 4) The photoengraving is made by a mechanical process in which the non-printing surface of the plate is removed — a process which can cause further distortion;
- 5) Any under-inking or over-inking of the plate will also distort the final image, and dampening the paper is yet another variable.

The question remained: if the fake was photographically made from a genuine copy, why did the type area dimensions differ from other genuine copies? Taylor's conclusion was that there must have been two separate printings on March 6 or 7, 1836. After the original impression the type had been unlocked in the chase, and then locked up again for another printing. In due course Taylor found that was indeed the case. After the original printing, the same type had been used in the March 12 issue of the *Telegraph and Texas Register*, published by Baker and Bordens, printers of the original Declaration. The type area of the newspaper printing matched that of the Burns copy.

There are a dozen fakes of the Texas Declaration broadside known. They have sold for prices between \$7,500 and \$30,000. An authentic copy was sold in the fall of 1988 for \$75,000.

The revelations of the Declaration forgery proved a touchstone for the unmasking of others. Taylor looked for other Texas documents that had once been rare but were

now more common, that had originated with certain dealers who had sold many copies of the forged Declaration, or were poorly printed or showed signs of being made from a retouched negative.

One such was the printed broadside version of William Berrett Travis' "Victory or Death" letter from the Alamo, the most famous Texas document of all. Ten fakes of the Travis broadside were found, all apparently based on a genuine copy possibly stolen or otherwise missing from the Texas State Library. Although Streeter located a copy of the document at the State Library, Taylor says that the Library is not willing to confirm that it ever had a copy. (The second copy, Streeter's own, was obtained by exchange from the Library in 1953, according to a note in his handwriting on the document.) Unless Streeter was wrong about the source of his copy, which is unlikely, the inescapable conclusion is that another copy was once in the Texas State Library along with the copy that Streeter obtained by exchange.

Tom Taylor discovered three documents that are not forgeries but fabrications. (One recalls Thomas J. Wise's fabrications of "first editions" that never existed.) One was an announcement of races at the Columbia Jockey Club on April 11, 1835. Bradely Hutchinson, Taylor's pressman, thought the type looked like Century to him — and it was, Linotype Century, produced in 1896. The text of the broadside came from an 1835 newspaper advertisement.

Another fabrication was a broadside dated August 1836, announcing the founding of the city of Houston, and printed in Linotype Bodoni.

All told, there are more fake copies of these old Texas documents than genuine ones. Tom Taylor has named as sellers of the majority 1) John Jenkins, an ex-president of the ABAA, who says he bought most of his fakes from 2) William Simpson, a Houston auctioneer; and 3) C. Dorman David. David is a former book dealer and drug user, who has admitted making printing plates of some of the documents. He claimed the purpose was to make up a portfolio of facsimile Texas documents. Some of his "facsimiles" may have made their way into the market, or the plates may have been used by other parties to produce the forgeries.

One result of Tom Taylor's research has been the action of the Antiquarian Booksellers' Association of America to identify other forged documents. John Curtis, head of the ABAA ethics committee, has announced that the ABAA has established a committee to compile pertinent facts about forged imprints. The committee is chaired by Jennifer Larson and includes Tom Taylor. Any information on questioned imprints should be sent to Jennifer Larson, Yerba Buena Books, 882 Bush St., San Francisco, CA 94108.

So far the ABAA committee has circulated a list of questioned imprints, including of course the Texas Declaration and *The Oath of a Freeman*. Of the 32 imprints listed, 17 are from Texas, nine from Utah, two each from Pennsylvania and Massachusetts, and one each from Delaware and Kansas. Since we now have a good picture of the fraudulent Texas and Utah imprints, one is naturally interested in the documents from Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Delaware and Kansas. Are they, too, the tips of other icebergs?

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APHA NEWS

APHA Awards The annual awards of the Association were presented on January 28th in the Trustees' Room of the New York Public Library. APHA President James Green presented the individual award to Roderick D. Stinehour, who established the Stinehour Press in 1950. Apart from his great contribution to scholarly printing at the Stinehour Press, Rocky published the important *Printing and Graphic Arts* in the 1950s, and served as one of its editors. *PaGA* published many important articles on printing history. Since its inception in 1979, *Printing History*, APHA's journal, has been carefully and beautifully printed at the Stinehour Press. Rocky Stinehour spoke of the beginnings of the press in a talk illustrated with slides.

The institutional award was presented to the St. Bride Printing Library. The Library opened in 1895 and soon after absorbed the printing library of William Blades. It is now one of the largest special collections on printing and related subjects in the world. Since 1966 the Library has been maintained and administered by the Corporation of London. The award was accepted on behalf of St. Bride's by its librarian since 1958, James Mosley. Mr. Mosley is also the editor of the *Journal of the Printing Historical Society*, London.

Treasurer's Report At the annual meeting at which the awards were made, Treasurer E.H. "Pat" Taylor gave a summary of APHA's finances. Here it is, in abbreviated form:

INCOME	
Dues	\$24,637
Publication Sales	6,285
Conference Registrations	5,370
Miscellaneous	1,368
Total	\$37,660
EXPENSES	
Membership Expenses	\$ 1,549
Publications	25,242
Program Expenses	4,426
Administration	7,976
Total	\$39,193
Beginning Reserves	\$14,483
Ending Reserves	\$12,950
Loss in Operation = \$1,533.	

1989 Conference The 1989 APHA Annual Conference will be held on October 6th and 7th at the Houghton Library, Harvard College, Cambridge, near the spot where printing began in North America 350 years ago. Reserve these dates now! (Details of the program will be given in the next *Newsletter*; the subject will be printing in Colonial New England.)

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 10163-4922. Copyright © 1988 by the American Printing History Association. All rights reserved.

Renewal This is the last call for renewal of membership for 1989 for those who wish to continue to receive *Printing History* and this newsletter.

Back Issues Back issues of *Printing History* are available at the following prices:

1-15	\$75
11-15	\$25

Or at \$10 per individual issue. (Numbers 6 and 14 are out of print and will be supplied in Xerox form.) Address all orders, with check, to APHA, Renée Weber, Executive Secretary, P.O. Box 4922, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163-4922.

Advertisements It has been suggested that an additional page of classified advertisements might be welcomed as part of this newsletter. Comments from readers and potential advertisers are welcomed.

TYPE & PRESSES

Bob Richter, Chairman of the Board of The Friends of the Museum of Printing, reports that the group now has the possibility of 60,000 feet of exhibition space in the National Park Service section of the Charlestown Navy Yard in Boston. The collection has been stored there for the past three years; now the National Park Service is considering allowing the Friends a long-term lease under three conditions: The Friends must have a structural analysis of the building done (\$10,000); must provide an architect's proposal for the use of the building (\$20,000-\$25,000); and must find a party or parties willing to fund the estimated cost of the makeover and installation (\$3,300,000-\$3,600,000.) The challenge is great, but Bob Richter feels that the location is superb, being only a short distance from the U.S.S. Constitution, "Old Ironsides," which draws over 60,000 visitors a year. To enroll as a member of the Friends, send \$25 (tax deductible) to:

Mr. David Annis, Membership Chairman
The Friends of the Museum of Printing, Inc.
P.O. Box 32, 60 Prospect Road
Plympton, MA 02367

Ramage Press A working replica of a wooden Ramage press can be seen in operation at the John Boardman House, Museum Village, Huntsville, Alabama. The press is in a working printing shop of about 1819, when John Boardman was the publisher of the *Alabama Republican*.

BOOKS

[Mergenthaler, Ottmar] & Carl Schlesinger, ed. *The Biography of Ottmar Mergenthaler, Inventor of the Linotype*. 7" x 10", 126 pp., hardbound, illustrated. Oak Knoll Series on the History of the Book. New Castle: Oak Knoll Books, 1988. Available from Oak Knoll Books, 414 Delaware St., New Castle DE 19720. \$26.00 + \$2.50 shipping; limited edition in slipcase, \$45.00 + \$2.50.

The main portion of this book is a reprint of an anonymous biography of Mergenthaler that appeared in Baltimore in 1898 with no author or publisher's name. Some basic research soon showed that it was dictated by Mergenthaler himself to Otto Schoenrich, his children's tutor, in an effort to get his story to the public before his death from consumption in the same year. He had been embroiled in a bitter struggle with a syndicate formed by Whitelaw Reid to manufacture and market the machine. The syndicate had its own interests, which were not necessarily those of the inventor. In fact, one of the most telling events described in the book was the attempt of the Mergenthaler Linotype Company in 1895 to remove the inventor's name: "We find that almost daily the first part of the name is misspelt in checks, drafts, and other paper. Again, the writing of this name, as frequently happens four or five hundred times a day by one person, involves a serious amount of labor..." Mergenthaler refused, saying "Of the many communications received... from the company... I do not remember one which has made so painful an impression on me." He closed the letter by asking that he hoped he "may be spared the intended humiliation..."

This part of the book was reproduced from my own copy, and I am happy to have played even this small part in its resurrection. Mergenthaler's voice deserves to be heard.

Another section of the book describes in fascinating detail Carl Schlesinger's attempt to find the exact lines in the New York *Tribune* of July 3, 1886 which had been set by the Linotype — the first use of the machine. Whitelaw Reid had insisted that the Linotype face must exactly match the handset foundry type the *Tribune* normally used. Mergenthaler met this challenge, as Schlesinger's research showed, by inserting electrotyped matrices of the *Tribune*'s type into the Linotype matrices. These matrices were short-lived, but Mergenthaler satisfied Reid's conditions. The result was Linotyped images so perfectly blended into the fabric of the newspaper that until Carl Schlesinger found them, they had eluded detection.

Other sections of the book includes descriptions in detail of the early operation of the Linotype, and reprints of part

think would be best for the Republican party.

MR. BRIGET AS WHIPPER-IN.

It is a melancholy spectacle to see John Bright acting on two memorable occasions as

A portion of p. 4 of the New York Daily Tribune, July 3, 1886. As deduced by Carl Schlesinger, the lines below the rule were the first use of the Linotype. The lines above the rule were handset.

of an 1898 catalogue of Ottmar Mergenthaler & Co. of Baltimore, which the inventor founded and which could sell only parts, not complete machines.

This is a fascinating book for those interested in the history of machine composition.

Schreyer, Alice. *East-West: Hand Papermaking Traditions and Innovations*. Newark (Delaware): University of Delaware Library, 1988. 6" x 9", 56 pp., paperbound. Printed by Henry Morris at the Bird & Bull Press. Regular edition \$10; special numbered edition bound in an adaptation of Dutch gilt paper, \$35.00. Order from the Office of the Director, University of Delaware Library, Newark DE 19717-5267.

This is a catalogue by APHA trustee Alice Schreyer of an exhibition of hand papermaking at the University of Delaware Library in late 1988. 73 items are listed and described in six sections: "The Eastern Tradition," "The Western Tradition," "The Traditions Revived," "Sample and Specimen Books," "Decorated Papers," and "Paper Art." It is a concise and scholarly catalogue of the milestones in the history of the art and craft of papermaking, and is also a celebration of 30 years of papermaking by one of the most important of the modern practitioners of the art, Henry Morris. Beautifully printed by Morris, it is a valuable and attractive contribution to the literature of papermaking.

BRIEFLY NOTED

We have received a few photocopied pages of the new *Journal of Printing History*. It is the publication of the international "Working Group of Printing History," a group of European and North American scholars who have met in Europe regularly for the past few years. "This new journal intends to publish research material on the field of the history of printing for the benefit of the interested public." Two issues will be published each year, with text in German, English and French. The *Journal* is published by Typostudio SchumacherGebler, Goethestrasse 21, D-8000 München 2, West Germany.

The Pforzheimer Lectures on Printing and the Book Arts resume at the New York Public Library for six Wednesdays at 6 P.M., starting on March 29. The series title is "Printing and Publishing in Eighteenth-Century France." The emphasis appears to be mainly on publishing. The lectures are \$3.50 each. For a brochure, write to The Public Education Program, New York Public Library, Room M-6, Fifth Avenue at 42nd St., New York, NY 10018-2788, or telephone 212/930-0571 for recorded ticket availability and schedule information.

The Typocrafters will hold their annual meeting in Louisville, Kentucky, on October 6-8. Plans include a focus on fine printing by Victor Hammer, the Anvil Press, Contre Coup Press, and King Library Press. For further information write Typocrafters 1989, Timothy Hawley, 2114 Douglass Boulevard, Louisville, KY 40205.