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A MONTHLY ONLINE PUBLICATION DEVOTED TO LETTERPRESS PRINTING. GALLEY GAB IS PUBLISHED THE FIRST DAY OF EACH MONTH.

INSIDE:

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Sky Shipley holds second Thompson caster class/ p16

ABOUT GALLEY GAB...

■ **GG is published** the first day of each month and the free GG PDF file can be downloaded at this site: www.galleygab.net

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THE Development of **Platen Jobbers**

RUGGLES AND GORDON: **The Invention of the Platen Job Press**

By **STEPHEN O. SAXE**

GEORGE PHINEAS GORDON claimed that Benjamin Franklin appeared in a dream and described the mechanism of a platen job press to him. In gratitude he called the invention the "Franklin," but it is worth noting that Gordon also received — and acknowledged — considerable nonectoplasmic help from a predecessor, Stephen P. Ruggles of Boston.

In a letter dated October 11, 1873, Gordon wrote to Ruggles:

. . . I have, in times gone by, most cheerfully accorded to Ruggles the introduction — the origination — of the treadle job press. I have ever said the conception was YOURS, and that your efforts, skill and persistency against great opposing obstacles introduced it. Glory enough for one man ... I shall be

ready, ever, to accord my testimony ... to set you right in the eyes of the world, as the pioneer and the great prototype of job printing-presses; and the one which all other builders have taken as their great model ... Had it not been for Stephen P. Ruggles I should not have been where I am today. I should never have built a printing-press ...

This gracious acknowledgment was printed in the *Typographic Advertiser* in 1879, a year after Gordon's death. We are very familiar with Gordon's presses, which are still very much with us in countless small job shops and amateur printing shops everywhere. But Ruggles' presses are hardly to be seen anywhere.

Stephen P. Ruggles was born July 4, 1808 in Windsor, Vermont. He was apprenticed to

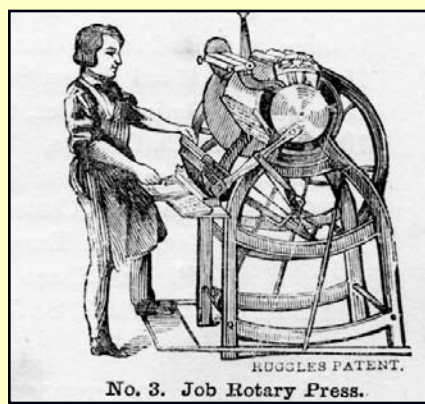
a printer there, but his mechanical bent appeared early. While still an apprentice he made an early attempt to ink the forms of a hand press by means of a roller. In 1826 he went to Boston, worked as a pressman, and in his spare time devised and built a cylinder power printing press on which the Ladies Magazine was printed.

In his autobiography Ruggles wrote "In 1830 or 1831 I invented and built, in New York, in Minor's machine shop, the first card or job press, I believe, ever constructed in any part of the world. This press worked with a vibrating platen and was the first press ever contrived to receive, on its platen, the paper, or card to be printed."¹ This press was operated by Ruggles in the office of Daniel Fanshaw in the American Tract Society building in New York.

The press was able to print enameled cards and became a great favorite with printers and "a source of considerable profit for several years" to Ruggles. I do not know of any pictures of this



Left, Ruggles' "Upside-down Press" of 1840; right, his Rotary Job Press of 1849—the direct antecedent of the modern platen job press.



press, but it should be noted, lest we think of it as a modern jobber, that it was made of wood. We have the authority of Thomas MacKellar that "he built another wooden press, on the same plan, for the use of George P. Gordon in his business of card and job printing."²

Ruggles returned to Boston in 1833 and there continued the manufacture of the press, but in iron instead of wood. In 1840 he invented a power job printing machine, the first of which was in the office of Samuel Dickinson, a fine printer and later a leading typefounder. According to MacKellar, "this machine enabled a boy to print thirty sheets in the time required for a man and boy to print four sheets on the old hand-press. Mr. Ruggles got up various sizes and styles of job and card presses, and furnished Mr. Gordon with such as he required, and made him an agent for the sale of the machines."³

It should be noted that the "power" supplied to the press originated with the foot of the pressman, applied to a treadle. He received his patent for this press November 10, 1840, and manufactured it in four sizes.

Although this press was a great advance, it left room for improvement. It was known among printers as "the upside-down press" because the bed containing the form was placed above

the platen, which moved upward to make the impression. About 1500 to 2000 impressions per hour were possible, a great improvement over the 250 impressions per hour of the hand press.

For several years after this Ruggles invented machinery for printers, including stereotype plate shaving machines, lathes, and gear-designing apparatus. In 1849 he returned to presses with the Ruggles Rotary Job and Card Press, from which the modern platen jobber is descended. Some of the features of this press were the same as in his earliest card press of 1831, but now arranged in a more convenient manner.

In 1854 Ruggles sold all his patents and the good will of the business to the S. P. Ruggles Power Press Manufacturing Co. in Boston, and retired with a fortune of over \$500,000. He sold out at the right time, because George Gordon's presses were beginning to take away his market. But he continued to invent; in 1859 he received a patent for an iron hand press that made use of a screw — the patent model was formerly on display at the Smithsonian and the only known full size press is in the stacks

1. Quoted from Ruggles' autobiographical manuscript in the archives of the New England Historic Genealogical Society by Rollo G. Silver, "The Autobiography of Stephen P. Ruggles," *Printing History* I, Vol. 1, No. 1 (New York, 1979), p.13.

2. MacKellar, Thomas. "Ruggles and Gordon." *Typographic Advertiser*, Vol. XXIV, Nos. 95 & 96 (Philadelphia, 1879), p. 689. The letter from Gordon to Ruggles is printed here.

3. *Ibid.*

at Harvard's Houghton Library. Ruggles died in 1880.

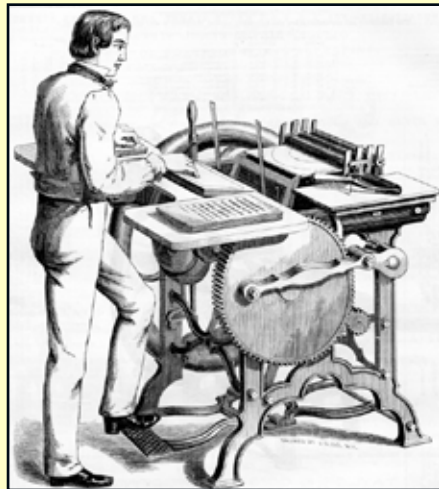
As we have seen, Ruggles had provided his earliest card press to a New York City printer named George Phineas Gordon. Gordon was born April 21, 1810 in Salem, New Hampshire — another ingenious Yankee mechanic. No doubt taking his inspiration from the Ruggles press, as early as 1835 he is recorded as inventing a "Speedy Card Press," although it was not patented and we do not know what it looks like. He returned to the printing trade for several years, and his first press patent was granted March 26, 1850, when Ruggles' Job Engine Press had been on the market a full ten years. Gordon's press was similar but had the virtue of not suspending the type upside down. Ralph Green has written that to the best of his knowledge, no example of this press or picture of it has ever been found.

The following year, 1851, Gordon brought out his Alligator. The press was reliable and fast, although its snapping jaws were an ever-present danger to careless printers' fingers. It had a good sale for several years. The only one I know of is owned by the Nebraska State Historical Society.

On August 5, 1851 Gordon was granted

another patent, one which was the basic design for his later, immensely successful presses. This press, called the "Turnover," was objected to by an unnamed patent owner — perhaps Ruggles — who claimed that it violated his rights.⁴ This is the press that Gordon (a spiritualist) said was described to him in a dream by Ben Franklin. The press was called the Turnover, because of the novel movement of the platen; within a few years Gordon had simplified and improved it greatly. By 1858 it appeared essentially in its final form.

Although Gordon sold thousands of presses during his career, most were made for him by outside machine shops. At the height of the press's popularity, however, Gordon built his own factory in Rahway, New Jersey, with a capacity of 600 presses a year. (In 1901 the factory and right to use the



George Phineas Gordon's Franklin Job Press, described to him in a dream by Ben Franklin. From *The Printer*, New York 1858.

name Gordon on its presses were bought by Chandler and Price.) The factory closed down in 1909.

When the time for his patent to expire drew near, Gordon devised some changes for an Improved Franklin. One of these was a throwoff, which had been in use on other presses for some time. This press was known in the trade as the "brass arm Gordon" because of a brass name plate on one of the side arms. It never was as popular as the "old-style Gordon," but it can still be seen in various forms and under any of 18 different manufacturers' labels in letterpress shops.

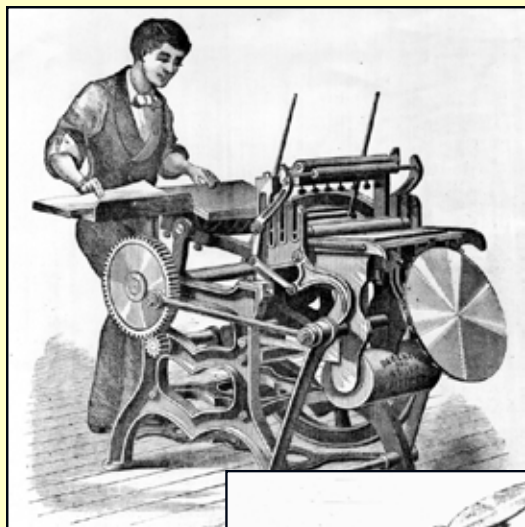
Gordon died January 27, 1878, and left a fortune that was estimated at almost a million dollars. His will was known to exist, but it took his family 12 years to find it. His real legacy was a printing press that can still be found in operation in every state of the Union and probably in every country in the world.

4. "Gordon's Improved Card and Job Presses." *The Printer*, Vol. I, No. 1 (May, 1858), p. 9.

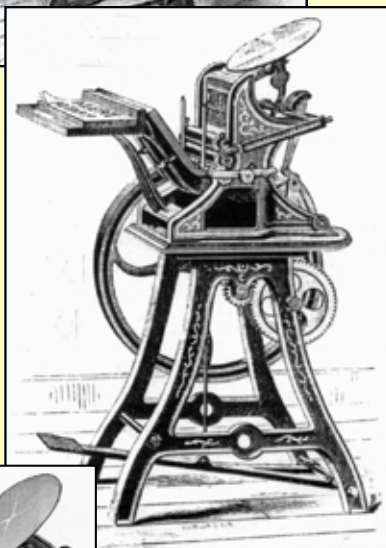
Platen Jobbers

I once read a news story about a man who has revived the art of making Daguerreotypes. Why would anyone in this age of digital, auto-focus, auto-everything cameras want to submit himself to mercury fumes in a tedious and obsolete process? The answer is stated in Saxe's

Law: Yesterday's tedious commercial necessity is today's congenial pastime. The work processes of the past are the hobbies of today. As prime examples I cite weaving and cabinet-making. In the book arts this is especially true; viz. papermaking, typesetting, hand composi-



Above, the Liberty Press; right, the Alert Rotary Press



Golding Official

tion of type, hand press printing, platen jobber printing, and bookbinding. The amateur's enthusiasm for these processes has kept them alive long after their commercial usefulness ended.

The platen jobber's introduction by Ruggles and Gordon has been described. In this article I will describe a few of the later presses, many of which are still to be found printing away in countless amateur basement printing shops, and now in their second century of use.

Gordon's Franklin Press, the principles of which he claimed were told to him in a dream by Ben Franklin, became the standard very quickly. It was ideal for rapid work—simple in operation and low in cost. The press came on the scene about 1863, and during the life of the patent it became the single most popular press in America. It was widely copied overseas—in England it was known as the "Anglo-American Arab," "Minerva," or "Cropper"; in France as "La Minerve".

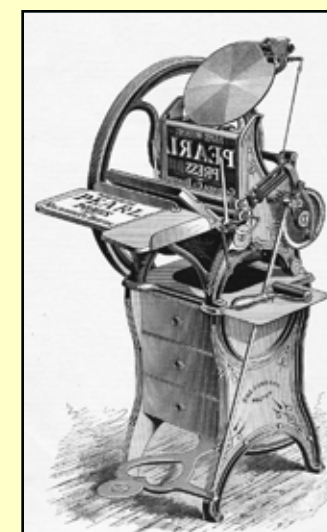
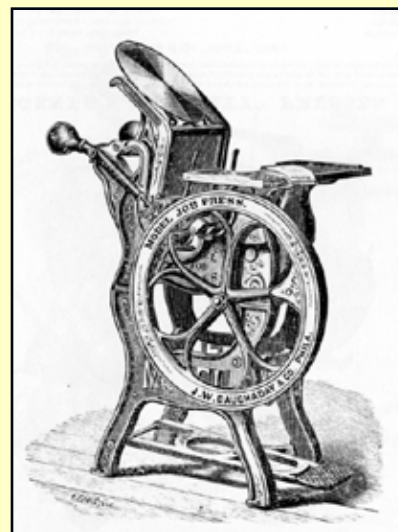
In the early 1870s, as the time approached for Gordon's patent to expire, he worked to make improvements that would hold his market position when competition would begin. In 1872 he patented an improved design with added features like a throwoff, but the old press was so well-liked that the market was overwhelmed by copies and adaptations.

Among them were the Challenge, Chandler & Price Gordon, Jones

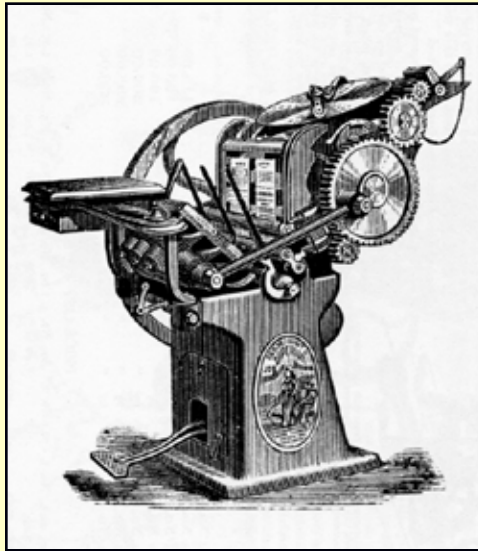


Gordon Press Works, Rahway, NJ

Gordon, and the Thorp Gordon. Over the years the Gordon press made by Chandler & Price of Cleveland was the most popular, and eventually by the 1950s became the only survivor. About 25 years ago C&P sent out a letter claiming that the press (which was still used extensively in schools) was dangerous, and this resulted in the dumping of thousands of C&P



Model Press and Golding Old Style Pearl



Hunt Superior Press



Columbian Rotary Press

presses and great damage to what remained of the letterpress business in the U.S.

In the 19th century the Gordon press had some competition. The Degener & Weiler Liberty Press was a strong contender, although today it seems somewhat unwieldy. The press was designed by Gordon's machinist Frederick Degener. At one time the press was built in a factory inside the Brooklyn Bridge—that is, inside one of the vaulted commercial spaces under the roadway on the New York side.

The Liberty's rollers were held in vertical saddles by gravity, not springs, and could be instantly removed by the pressman. The bed at the rear of the press moved away from the platen during the feeding part of the cycle, moving quite a distance. Pressmen said that the Liberty was as large as "half a press when closed and two presses when open." Very few Liberty presses survive; there is one at Mystic Seaport's printing office restoration. Another was at Bowne's shop at South Street Seaport, until its superb collection of hand presses and platen jobbers was dispersed by the museum's misguided management some years ago. I do not know where it is now.

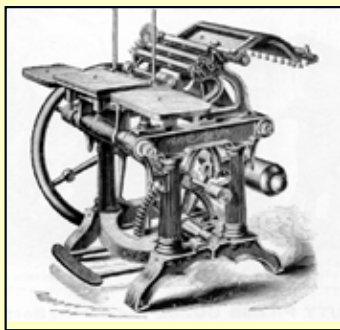
High on any list of important platen jobbers are the Golding line of presses. These included the Official, which has a base like a hot-towel steam unit in an old-fashioned barber shop; the Golding Jobber, a heavy and magnificent press with many nice features, including a wedge adjustment for the platen; and the Pearl presses, one of today's amateur's favorites.

The Pearl Old Style press was made without a throwoff, and with three wooden drawers in the base to hold ink and gauge pins and sundries. In 1895 Golding & Co. introduced the heavier Improved Pearl, with some added features, an extra roller, and a throwoff. It became a very popular press because of its speed on light work. An old printer told me that in his youth he worked for a printing shop where there were several boys running treadle Pearl presses. Since they were paid by the piece for imprinting envelopes, the presses ran all day at high speed, and the boys became adept at switching chases for the next job "almost without stopping the press."

The Colt's Armory press was in a class by itself, since an ingenious system of movements gave it an almost-parallel impression. It was a very heavy press that did superb work, and was based on Merritt Gally's Universal Press. The Colt's armory Press was made, naturally enough, at the Colt firearms factory in Hartford, Connecticut. Its inventor, John Thompson, eventually bought the rights to manufacture it in 1902, organizing the John Thompson Press Co. The Thompson-National Press Co. was still making these presses—for cutting, creasing, embossing, and similar work—at the old Golding factory in Franklin, Massachusetts when I visited it in the 1980s.

Two of the most decorative of the old job presses grew out of smaller table-top presses made for amateurs. One was the Model, made by Daughaday in Philadelphia, which had un-

usual cast-iron ball counterweights assisting the movement of the rollers. The other was Curtis & Mitchell's Columbian Press—no relation to the hand



Potter Press

press of the same name—which was embellished with oval bas-reliefs of Columbia's head on the sides of the base.

Another very decorative press is the Potter, featuring classical Corinthian columns as part of the frame. It is shown here in an advertisement from *The Printer* magazine in 1859. I have never seen one of these presses. They were made from 1858 to about 1866 by C. Potter of Westerley, Rhode Island.

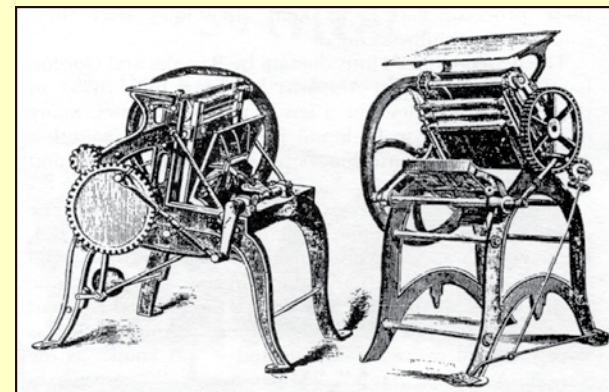
There were many other platen jobbers on the market in the nineteenth century, some

very unusual, that have now completely disappeared. For instance, I have never seen the Asteroid Jobber made by the Cincinnati Type Foundry, about 1875, or either of Charles Foster's jobbers, the Locomotive Jobber ("made on the principle of the 'Alligator Press'"), or his Excelsior. Foster made presses, with some success, in Cincinnati and later Philadelphia from about 1852, but his presses are virtually unknown today. The Excelsior seems to have been made later by William Braidwood of New York, about 1868, but the Locomotive Press is not mentioned in Ralph Green's *A History of the Platen Jobber*.

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Further Reading

An indispensable guide is Ralph Green's classic *A History of the Platen Jobber* (Chicago, 1953; reprinted by Harold Sterne, Cincinnati, 1981.) In a small



Left, Foster Locomotive Jobber; right Foster Excelsior

space Green has condensed a lot of research and has listed the dates and manufacturers of most American platen presses. An excellent collection of pictures of a great many presses can be found in Harold Sterne's "[Catalogue of Nineteenth Century Printing Presses](#)."

Most of my illustrations are from Sterne's book. The best single source for general information about all presses is James Moran's *Printing Presses* (Berkeley & Los Angeles, 1973.)

TRICKS OF THE TRADE ...from *Type & Press*

No need to wipe off misprints on the top sheet with solvent saturated rags. Instead rub a small amount of ordinary talcum powder on the top sheet. This will prevent offsetting on the back of the printed work.

A wire coat hanger twisted into a hook and fastened to the lower frame of any platen press will make a handy holder for the gripper wrench.

By turning empty galleys upside down in a galley rack they can quickly be located. Here's a tip on how to tell if type is hard foundry

metal or not. Scrape off a bit of the metal with a pen knife. If it comes off in a curl, it's Linotype; fair-sized chunks, it is Monotype; if tiny pieces, then it's hard foundry material. —Guy Botterill, Baltimore.

Paper stock which appears the same on both sides, should be fed into the press with the same side up as when it was trimmed. The knife will turn down a feather edge on the sheets. The upper edges will be clean and finished, while the undersides will be somewhat rough and "feathery."





Resurrection of a Reliance

THERE ARE DRAWBACKS TO BEING A DESIGNER IN THE DIGITAL AGE. The actual process of creating is erased with every click on the save button. Down the road you may get to hold in your hands a printed piece containing something you designed, but the immediate fruits of your labor are largely intangible.

The enthusiasm for letterpress printing among designers these days stems at least in part from a rediscovery of the pleasure of working with one's hands to create an object that bears all the indelible traces of its making. It is no coincidence that the rise in popularity of letterpress classes at the School of Visual Concepts (SVC) in Seattle came immediately on the heels of the local dot-com bust in 2002. Web design classes emptied out, and the letterpress classes filled up. This was not due to a belief in the lucrative benefits of a career in letterpress printing; it had something to do with satisfying the soul.

Recently, SVC acquired an inoperative Reliance iron handpress, circa 1895. Some parts of the press were damaged from misuse in its first life, but the main work of giving this press a second life consisted of designing and installing a hinged tym-

Text and photos by Juliet Shen

pan and frisket frame assembly, a device that would permit printing in registration. Thus the Reliance proofing press would be converted to a printing press—a higher reincarnation, if you will.

In Seattle we have a rare asset for fixing old letterpresses: retired aircraft engineers whose artistic souls have found fulfillment in the book arts and who know how to make just about anything work. When Carl Montford and Russ Wiecking undertook to renew the Reliance handpress for SVC, I decided to dog their every footstep and learn how things get made in the nonvirtual world.

THE PURSUIT. I was born in New York and moved to Seattle as an adult, so I think I have the perspective to state that there is something Northwestern in the spirit of an undertaking like this. People here love the outdoors, and if they can't find the equipment they need to enjoy it, they make it—this is the birthplace of REI stores. Northwesterners also have a strong sense of abode and like to have everything they need right at home. The parts for the SVC Reliance were all fabricated in Russ Wiecking's garage workshop. This



left: the dismantled Reliance proofing press, c. 1895



C. Montford

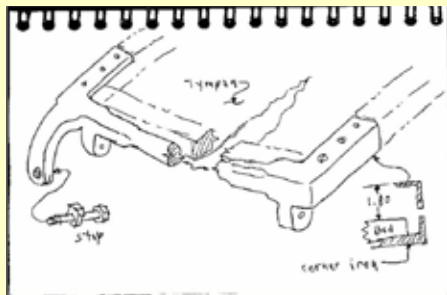


above: Carl Montford (rear) and Russ Wiecking, who have 67 years as Boeing engineers between them

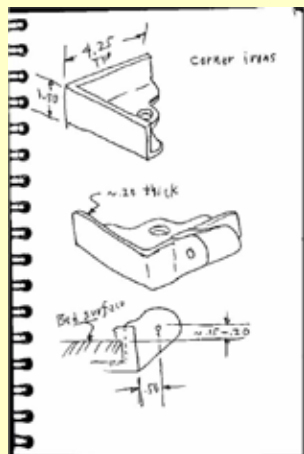
left: Russ at work on new parts for the press

below: entry to his woodshop

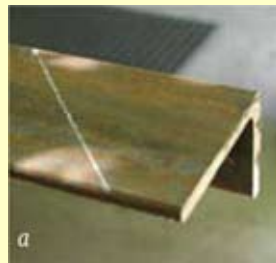




corner irons



Carl Montford's isometric drawings of tympan hinge and corner iron details



- (a) steel angle marked for cutting
- (b) cutting with a torch
- (c) welding along the mitered seam
- (d) brass pattern used for shaping the corner's floor
- (e) installing a corner iron on the press bed
- (f) rear corner iron with knuckle for tympan hinge pin
- (g) forward corner iron notched for the tympan frame



spirit leads to a propensity for indulging in what people elsewhere might consider futile pursuits—like weeding gardens, flyfishing, and fixing old letterpresses.

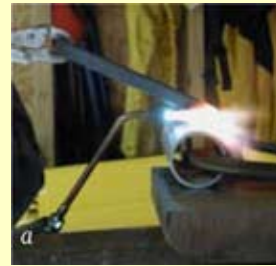
THE UNDERTAKING. It would take a confirmed optimist and seasoned veteran to see an operative press in a dust-covered, dismantled, 110-year old hulk. But Carl had previously resurrected a Reliance proofing press for his own use. His isometric sketches

for that project were the starting point for defining the scope of work on SVC's press. The other source for a design prototype was a larger Washington handpress at The Thorniley Collection of Antique Type, restored in 2005 by Carl and John DeNure, curator. The Washington had an operative tympan frame, so after observing it in operation, Russ was ready to work on the SVC Reliance.

THE SUM OF THE PARTS. This is not a how-to manual. It's the record of making new parts for an antique press that were not furnished by the original manufacturer. Of doing it to tolerances of hundredths of an inch from bits of surplus material employing an acetylene torch, a few saws, a drill press and some clamps—well, quite a few clamps. And of adding a good measure of ingenuity, a lot of patience and an indispensable pride of craft.

This may not interest people who possess these mechanical skills but have more sense than to employ them for this purpose. But it may interest those of us who mostly create weightless things with a keyboard and a mouse—things that disappear when we

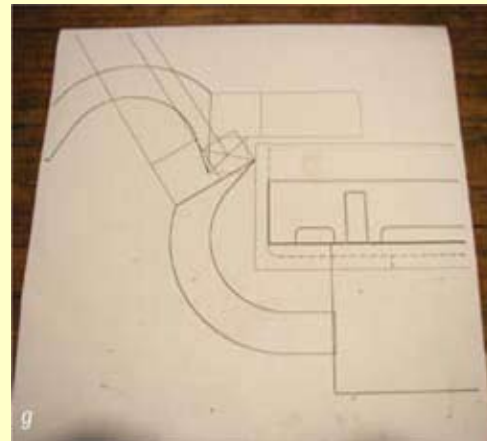
tympan hinge stop



(a–d) heating and bending 1" solid bar over a section of pipe to achieve the desired curve for the stop
(e) drilling one end for a bolt



(f) finished hinge stop with threaded hole
(g) Russ's diagram of the hinge stop's range of motion on the press
(h) hinge stop on the press with the tympan raised, bolt resting against the underside of the corner iron to prevent further rotation



put our computers to sleep.

I hope you enjoy witnessing the resurrection of a Reliance.

Glossary of components:

- **Corner irons**, as their name implies, bracket the four corners of the press bed, providing the framework to attach a tympan frame, and to lock up printing material on the press bed.

- The **tympan hinge stop** prevents the tympan frame from opening too far by coming to rest against the underside of a corner iron.

- The **tympan hinge** is attached to the corner irons on the end of the press bed. It is u-shaped and as wide as the bed. The wooden tympan frame is secured to the hinge at its corners.

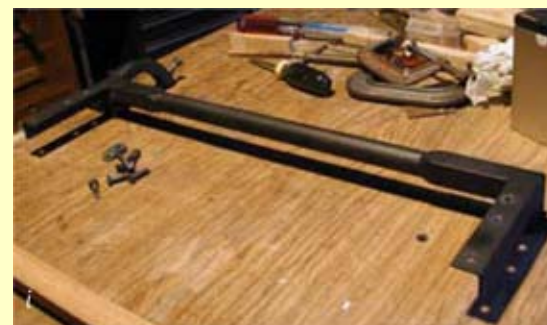
- The **tympan frame** is the size of the press bed and is stretched with paper. On one side it holds the press sheet to be printed on. On the opposite side it backs up the packing material that controls depth of impression.

- The **frisket frame** is hinged to the top of the tympan frame and folds down over the press sheet, keeping it in place during printing.

- The **back drawer** is attached

tympan hinge

(a) a length of angle makes an improvised welding platform
 (b) tacking the round and square bars together
 (c) the hinge corner, ground to a bevel before welding
 (d) the welded corner, seams chamfered and ground smooth
 (e) tapping the hole in the corner piece to receive a threaded bolt that will be the hinge pin
 (f) hinge pin being hand crafted from solid bar
 (g) hinge pin threaded through the hinge corner



(h) detail of the hinge and corner iron, with a nut on the pin to stop lateral movement
 (i) the completed hinge

to the opposite face of the tympan from the frisket, and locks the packing in place. This part was not in the original proposal, but was taken up later as a design challenge.

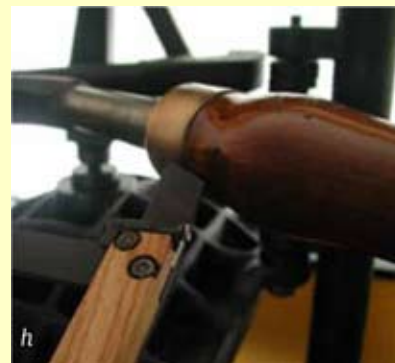
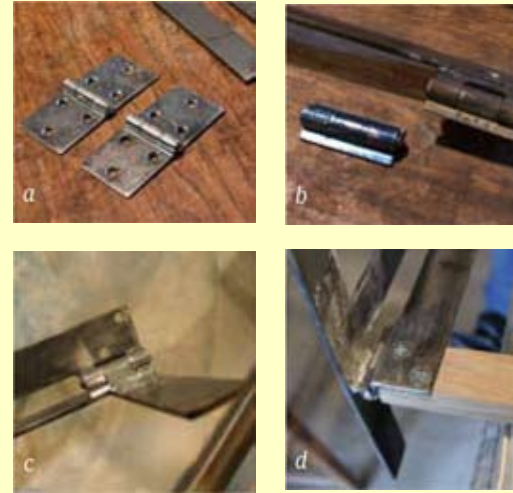
tympan frame

- (a) rough-shaping the frame arms on a bandsaw
- (b) finished arm (laying athwart the tympan hinge)
- (c) shaping one end piece with a plane
- (d) assembled frame, without the hinge
- (e) hex bolt after being soaked in muriatic acid to remove the nickel plating, then torched in charcoal to blacken it
- (f) steel hinge and wood frame joined
- (g) area of the press where tapering of the tympan arm is essential for clearance when the platen is lowered



frisket frame

(a–c) common hinges modified to make the frisket hinge
 (d) frisket hinge plate attached to the tympan arm; frame extends below to form a stop against the tympan arm
 (e) hinge pin replaced with a cotter pin for easy detachment of the frisket from the tympan
 (f) the frisket and tympan frames on the press, showing how the stop on the frisket frame limits its rotation
 (g) in the first fitting session, the frisket frame stop has trouble clearing the lever arm
 (h) the new detail



back drawer

There were no design prototypes for the back drawer, a frame that fits snugly inside the tympan frame. Carl, Russ and the author collaborated on a design that met two criteria: that the packing be both firmly secured and easy to change.

(a) the innovative lock, designed by Russ: a peg on the back drawer frame that fits into the small hollow created by a spur on the frisket hinge
 (b) at the other end of the frame (shown after papering), a latch devised by Russ that unlocks with the turn of a screw and slides into an inclined notch on the back drawer frame to accommodate the bulkiness of the packing



The decision to add a back drawer after the tympan and frisket frames had been made required Russ to lengthen both frames so the back drawer frame would safely clear the platen. (c) detail of the splice in the wood frame (d-e) final platen clearance at the rear and front of the press bed (f) tympan, frisket and back drawer assemblage after being papered

cast and crew

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The School of Visual Concepts gives classes in design, advertising and letterpress printing. SVC is now the proud owner of a newly resurrected Reliance handpress.
www.svcseattle.com
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fitting, papering,
 copying a pattern
 for the base, and
 enjoying the finished product

Editor's note: This article was taken from a printed piece written and designed by Juliet Shen. The typefaces were changed but I tried to keep the photo layout true to her original. A printed copy of this is still available from SVC or Ms. Shen. Their email addresses are to the right. My thanks to Ms. Shen.



Sky Shipley's THOMPSON TECH II

By DAVID KRENZ
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“Lettermaking in every form gives me the purest and greatest pleasure,” declared Rudolf Koch, “and on numberless occasions in my life it has been to me what a song is to the singer, a painting to the painter, a shout to the joyous, and a sigh to the afflicted—to me it is the happiest and most perfect expression of my life.” The renowned typographer’s words came to mind several weeks ago, as I—together with Greg Walters (Piqua, OH) and Ky Wrzesinski (Middleton, WI)—was privileged to attend this year’s Thompson Tech.

The three of us arrived the evening of October 24th. Schuyler “Sky” Shipley, proprietor of **Skyline Type Foundry**, began by showing us around. Situated on the “west coast” of Illinois, just outside of Kampsville, Skyline enjoys a scenic rural setting. The building which houses his printery and foundry was designed

by Sky for efficiency and spaciousness. Visitors to Skyline often characterize it as the shop we all dream about. Not fussy nor a museum, it is nevertheless a clean, well-lighted space. There are enough tools; there is a place for everything

and everything is in its place. The foundry currently houses a fully operational Thompson typecaster, another which is beautifully refurbished and nearly ready-to-go, and two more which are scheduled for a rebuild in the near future.

The Thompson typecaster was invented in 1907 by John S. Thompson and marketed with the slogan “every printer his own typefounder.” Though modest in size and considerably less complex than a Linotype, the Thompson is still a marvel of early 20th century ingenuity. It is capable of producing type ranging in size from 6 to 48 points. And, with the proper molds and matrix carriers, it can cast type from foundry, Monotype, Ludlow, and Linotype matrices.

Shipley clearly loves the Thompson, and



David Krenz, Ky Wrzesinski (back to camera), Sky Shipley and Greg Walters.

his enthusiasm is contagious. Though we came early for class on Thursday morning, he was already busy in the shop and the “pot was hot.” Sky began with detailed instructions about proper start-up: oiling sequence, pump plunger insertion, adding metal to the pot, and stirring in the dross (“Agitate the Eutectic” is his motto). Next followed detailed step-by-step instructions for switching out a mold.

Serious attention was given to safety. The molten lead is hot! It is injected into the matrix under great pressure. No one wants to get burned. In addition, the machinery, though made of cast iron, is fragile. If not properly set up or maintained, a part can break. Then, good luck with finding a replacement. As novice typesetters, such safety concerns were very much on our minds. Sky responded by outlining workable procedures, which encourage caution but avoid panic.

Then we began casting type. For the next 2½ days, we each took turns at the Thompson: dialing in proper alignment; setting the machine speed, water rate, and oil flow; receiving the types as they marched out onto the stick; brushing and fonting them; adding more lead to the pot; watching...listening; working letter-by-letter to complete a full font.

The workshop is designed to train both head and hands. Sky would alternate between periods of instruction and hours of hands-on practice. Like a good engineer, his method is to gather data, develop a system, and then stick to the process consistently. He insists on preci-

sion, accuracy, record-keeping, and cleanliness.

In one presentation, he demonstrated the seldom-seen anatomy of the choker valve. On another occasion, Deacon Shipley delivered a homily on the Mysteries of Alignment, using as his text a seemingly simple font of Garamont.

Our class project was to cast 18 point Neuland Inline. Neuland was the first of three typefaces cut by Rudolf Koch himself, based on his own calligraphy. The Inline is a lovely open version. Nevertheless, as a calligraphic font, it is often a challenge for the latter-day typesetter to judge Koch’s intention regarding the proper baseline and sidebearing of several characters. I must have struggled with the figure 4 for half an hour.



Like most good instructors, Sky teaches not only with words but also by example. He responds clearly to questions; he approaches frustrating problems patiently; and he pushes his students beyond their comfort level. Sky worked, and we all worked. We stayed with it



Sky Shipley demonstrates an adjustment.

well into the evening. Yet none of us wanted to miss a minute of this learning opportunity.

And we had fun. Arrangements had been made nearby for economical housing. But Sky and his charming wife Johanna welcomed us to their own table for meals. We soon felt like part of the family. Lots of stories. Lots of laughs. And lots of good food. Once we were treated to Bambi Barbecue so fresh it had been tripping through the forest only hours earlier (courtesy of Sky’s brother).

On Saturday the workshop concluded. Each of us bid our goodbys feeling richer for the experience. We return home better informed, more confident, and determined to pursue our own lettermaking. Koch was right. It is a pleasure.