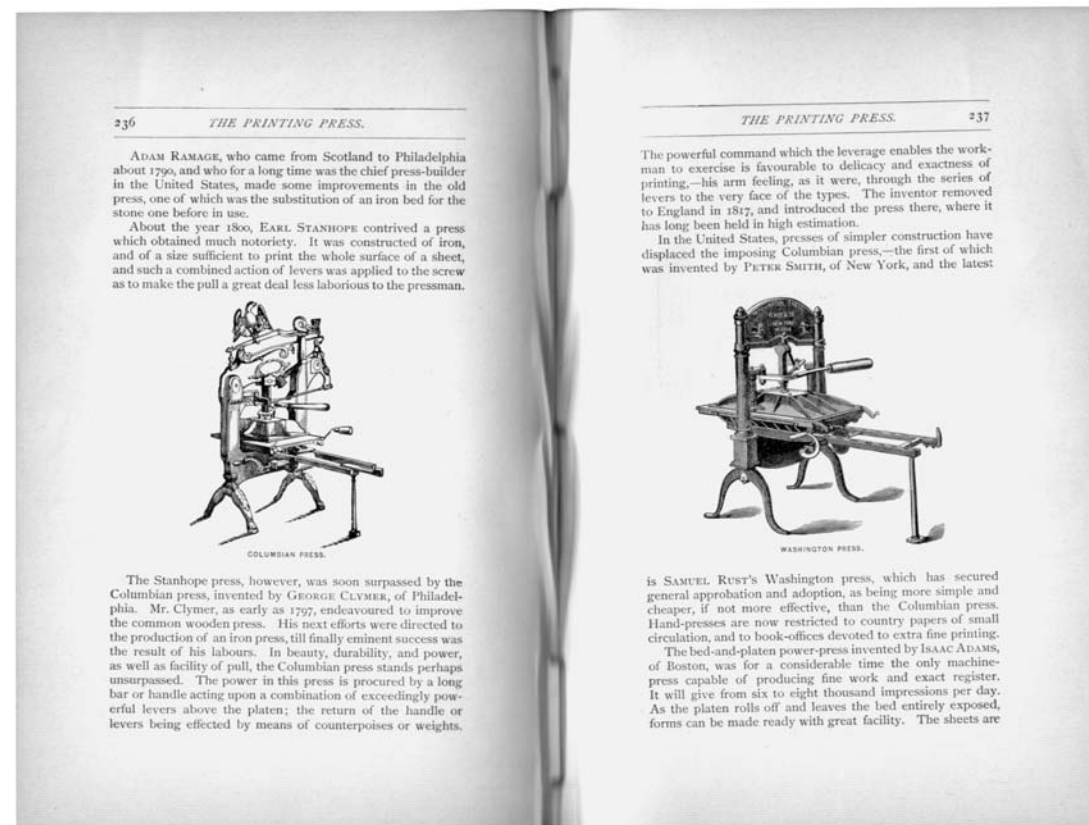


At the beginning of the nineteenth century, even though great technological advances would soon be made in the printing industry, the printers' basic tools – such as type, galleys, bodkins, quoins, chases with crossbars, furniture, points, adjustable composing sticks – remained the same. Printers were also slow to adopt new practices, sometimes for fear of losing their jobs. S. H. Steinberg, in his *Five Hundred Years of Printing* (1974, p. 277), notes: “The König printing machine [a high-speed cylinder press] had to be installed and operated in secret at *The Times* in 1814 in case it provoked violent actions among the hand-pressmen.” Many traditional practices were able to endure as long as they did simply because printers so zealously resisted adopting new technologies.

I have included a few curious innovations that did not survive the rigors of the workplace, of which Major Bartłomiej Beniowski's air balls and rollers is just one example. His intention (aside from possibly swindling his investors) was to make the printers' work less complicated, more productive, and in the end, more profitable for the master printer. His inking appliances seem unlikely to have succeeded.

At first glance, it may seem that historical practices have little in common with modern ones; however, a closer look will prove otherwise. In part, this book represents a personal quest to understand the origins of many of the printing practices that I, as a twentieth-century handpress printer of fine limited editions, either adapted, or out of necessity ignored. Having more knowledge about the historical aspect of the craft will help present-day handpress printers to become aware of how many of their modern practices are rooted in historical usage. In addition, the present work is also intended for those who are printing on iron handpresses in re-creations of nineteenth-century printing offices and who wish to follow correct historical practices, as well as for those in libraries who are using iron handpresses for bibliographical instruction. I hope these printers will think of



Double-page spread – from MacKellar (1893)

this book as a modern-day nineteenth-century printers' manual, since it contains all the basic information that is usually found in the comprehensive printers' manuals of that period.

Adams (1837, p. 49), in justifying the amount of detail found in his manual, says, “In performing this part of our duty, we shall endeavor, to the utmost of our humble ability, to explain everything in as concise and clear a manner as possible; at the same time we shall omit nothing, however trivial, that may be connected with this important subject. In doing this, we are fully aware that some will condemn such minutiae as unnecessary: but, let us ask, is it requisite, because a few are acquainted with it, that the information should be withheld from others? It is a subject which cannot fail to interest the general reader, and particularly so all the admirers of the Typographic Art.”

In the nineteenth century, serious printing was synonymous with book work, and was, therefore, also the emphasis of most of the earliest manuals of that century. As Jacobi (1890, p. vi) says, “Book printing is the criterion of printing in general; what are called jobbing and news-work are branches of minor importance.” While I was researching this book, I was struck by the lack of information pertaining to newspaper printing. It was not mentioned in any of the printers' manuals until late in the nineteenth century, despite the fact that newspapers had been printed in England since 1621 and in North America since 1704. It is also curious because news work was the mainstay of many printing offices in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

With the introduction of the vertical-platen jobbing press – the Ruggles in the 1840s and the Gordon in the 1850s – a separate specialization, called *job printing*, emerged, taking over much of the ephemeral work formerly done on handpresses. In the last three decades of the nineteenth century, an obsession for yet another type of printing, referred to as *ornamental printing*, became increasingly more popular. Its distinguishing features were a potpourri of types, rules, and ornaments, as well as an abundance of colored inks. Harpel (1870, p. 3), an enthusiastic proponent of this sort of printing, reminded his readers of the potential they had at their disposal to create works of lasting beauty: “The abundant supply of excellent and beautiful typographic appliances of every description now presented to the choice of the Printer, and the cultivated tastes and often exacting caprices of his patrons, render it not only comparatively easy but very necessary for him to attain to excellence in workmanship. If he would reap the rewards of profit and honor, he must be prepared to meet the varied demands of popular patronage with intelligence, taste, and skill, as well as be constantly alert to the best practical effects, if not the extreme possibilities, of his craft.”

It is my hope that present-day handpress printers will use this book as a reference and guide in order to improve their skills, as well as to strive in creating works of lasting beauty. But most of all, the goal of this book is to give all printing enthusiasts a better understanding of how books were printed in the nineteenth century.