CALIFORNIA PRINTING HISTORY AND
THE SHAKESPEARE PRESS MUSEUM

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by
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ABSTRACT

California Printing History and the Shakespeare Press Museum

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The Shakespeare Press Museum, a working letterpress museum at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, houses letterpress printing presses and equipment dating from the 1850s to the 1970s. Although the museum has been at Cal Poly since the 1960s, little work was completed on the historical context of the collections or to address the archival and educational frameworks of the museum's collection. This thesis has three purposes: to place the museum's collections in their nineteenth-century California historical context; to provide the first in-depth examination of the museum's original founder, Charles "Shakespeare" Palmer; and to create an archival reference and program for the museum's collections in their physical and digital form.

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This thesis is dedicated to the memory of the long line of California printers, and especially to the memory of Charles L. Palmer, whose vision made all this possible.

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Introduction

“I like printing, and believe we should preserve its tools as well as the examples of its work. Because of these goals, when I found the material on hand was of growing historical value I decided my hobby should become a lasting and growing exhibit, with its equipment maintained in use and not permitted to lapse into rusting idleness...I hope the collections will prove of increasing value to students of printing in the future.”¹

Charles L. Palmer,
Founder of the Shakespeare Press

In 1950, when Charles Palmer outlined his future hopes for his printing collection, he had already spent over ten years collecting and establishing his “hobby.” Within two decades his collection would open at California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo as a working letterpress museum. Now, fifty years after the founding of the museum, it is appropriate to examine the development of Palmer’s collection and its relevance to printers, historians, and the public in the twenty-first century.

The Shakespeare Press Museum is a working letterpress museum housed at California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo. The museum is located in the Graphic Communication Building on the Cal Poly Campus, and presently maintains over fifteen letterpress printing presses and over four hundred fifty cases of wood and metal type. The collection includes related tools of the nineteenth and twentieth century printing trades, from linotypes and paper cutters to typesetting tools and book presses, which enables the museum to also perform as a working printing office circa 1890. Student volunteer curators staff the museum, providing tours, class demonstrations, and letterpress studio time free to Cal Poly students, faculty, and the public. Through their efforts the equipment in the museum is “not

¹ Charles L. Palmer, quoted in Campbell Watson, “Finds Old Type Face Collection Fascinating, Profitable Hobby,” *Printing Magazine* (September 1949): 50, 68.

permitted to lapse into rusting idleness” and the functions of the museum have remained consistent to Palmer’s original goals.

Before arriving at Cal Poly, the “School for Country Printers,” in 1950, the collection of nineteenth century printing equipment was housed in the backyard print shop of Charles L. Palmer in Fresno, California. Palmer, who had run his own rural newspaper in the 1920s, began collecting discarded printing equipment from small shops in Northern and Central California as early as 1938, when he acquired one of his first presses from the Templeton *Advance*. Palmer’s love of California history and her early printing legacy, his familiarity with the printing trade, and his position as an advertising man for Pacific Gas and Electric enabled him to begin acquiring presses and equipment from small-town printing shops that were discarding their antiquated equipment in the face of rapid technological upheaval in the printing industry.

Printers throughout California supported Palmer’s endeavor, recognizing the importance of collecting pieces of their history that were otherwise disappearing into junk yards and basements. Soon Palmer acquired enough of a collection to consider donating it to public institution, and he eventually began transferring his equipment to Cal Poly. The collection, which was named the Shakespeare Press Museum in honor of Palmer’s original vision, still remains a significant and valuable collection of nineteenth century printing equipment. Its educational purposes continue to expand in the face of the current revolution in the printing industry with the advent of new forms of printing and publishing that are increasingly accessible to the public.

This thesis integrates the museum and its collection into the nineteenth-century historical context and a twenty-first-century archival framework. Although the museum’s functions have remained consistent to Palmer’s goals, there is a need for reassessment and reorganization of the

physical collection and the museum's place in current scholarly and public spheres. The thesis consists of both a scholarly article and an archival project which aim to improve the museum's presence as a public repository and a historical resource that provides a perspective on nineteenth-century California history.

The timeframe under observation spans three centuries of printing history, from roughly 1850 through to the twenty-first century, a period which contains remarkable and revolutionary transformations to California and to printing history. Each of the three centuries are present in the museum: the nineteenth-century collection, the twentieth-century origins of the museum, and the twenty-first-century present and future status of the museum. These divisions are reflected in the organization of the thesis, which is divided into three sections that examine the collections, the history of the museum, and the current status of the museum and the archival work I completed.

In the first section I examine the specific artifacts within the Shakespeare Press Museum collection that were employed in the nineteenth-century printing trade and locate them within the history of printing in California. These artifacts embody the complex relationships between the California and Eastern printing industries, where printers and related tradesmen cooperated and competed in an increasingly commercial and industrial profession.

The progress of the printing industry accelerated during the twentieth century, when increasingly complex machines threatened the traditional small local print shops. In this atmosphere of transformation, hobby printers such as Charles Palmer found it not only possible—but also *necessary*—to begin collecting antiquated and discarded presses, which they maintained and protected as historical artifacts. In the second section I trace Palmer's personal history and the origins and development of his collection. I examine the broader context in

which Palmer found it necessary to begin collecting printing equipment and the decision to move the press to Cal Poly in the 1950s.

The third section addresses the relevancy of the museum in the twenty-first century, which is facing its own printing revolution, not unlike the revolution experienced in the nineteenth century. The same forms of technology that threaten the traditional printing shop provide new forms of accessing the artifacts and knowledge housed within the museum. This section of the thesis includes a review of the archival work I completed as part of my thesis. I document the efforts to create and implement digital repositories and archives at the museum, which can be used as resources for researchers of printing and California history.

Why study printing history? Many people, before touring the museum, question the relevance and interest in a collection of antiquated printing machines. The traditional response is to quote the mantra of printing: the “art preservative of all arts,” but the reasons are often not clearly explained. Certainly, without printers and their equipment there would be far less recorded human history, which suggests that historians should examine their lives. “Whether as an agent of change or as a conservative force, the printing press provides us with most of, and the most important of, the materials from which we make our history.”² For historians of American printing, the information “has already been recorded—in the newspapers, books, pamphlets, manuscripts, and artifacts scattered throughout the collections in this country and abroad. The information is there. But, the point is that we have to organize it.”³ Printing historians have spent a great deal of time organizing printing history, tracing genealogies and writing biographies, compiling bibliographies and lists of printers’ imprints, and reproducing and publishing type

² Michael Winship, “The Art Preservative: From the History of the Book Back to Printing History,” *Printing History* 17, no. 1 (1995): 14.

³ Rollo G. Silver, APHA Conference Opening Talk, 1979.

specimen books and inventories, but they provide little explanation regarding the value of their research, other than for general interest.

The historiography of United States printing history tends to emphasize eighteenth-century printers and presses, pass over the nineteenth century with a brief mention of the industrialization of printing, and then end with the private press movement initiated near the turn of the twentieth century. The relative dearth of publications on the nineteenth-century printing industry reflects the difficulty capturing the explosion of printing shops westward and the boom and bust economy of many printing shops and related businesses. Recording the history of the United States printing industry in the nineteenth century poses difficulties similar to the challenges recording the twenty-first century desktop-publishing phenomenon.

The historiography is long, dating back to Isaiah Thomas' *The History of Printing in America* in 1808. However, by 1990 a new discipline known as the history of the book challenged the significance of printing history by subsuming printing history into a larger narrative of how printed materials affected human history. Historians became less concerned with the *who* and *how* of printing and instead focused on the impact of the printed word on society. Far more research and publishing are conducted presently on the history of the book, which can speak to several different disciplines and fields, than on printing history.

The history of the book appears to hold a greater interest to historians in general than the history of printing, primarily because of the broadening of the focus from printers to society in general. Studying what people read includes far more citizens than who printed what they read. However, printing history should not be dismissed as outdated and antiquated. In the same way that the nineteenth-century printing press can capture the attention of a general audience, printing

history has the potential to engage many fields and approaches to history, including social, material, technological, gender, regional, and labor histories.

Recent studies of printing, especially those examining the western United States, have illustrated the potential for printing histories with a broader geographic and social scope. Printing included far more than the printing of books. Printers produced the printed matter of daily life—from bank notes and train tickets to menus and calling cards—as well as religious, political, and organizational pamphlets, journals and newspapers. The introduction of new presses, sources of power, techniques of producing paper and binding books—especially in the nineteenth century—had an important impact on the quantity and quality of the printed material people had access to. Drawing on the compilations, reproductions, and publications of the early printing historians permits a new generation to paint broader strokes in the history of printing and its role in daily life.

Studying printing history is an excellent way to study social history. Because many of the tools of the trade of printing are still in use today, in places such as the Shakespeare Press Museum, the public can engage in the process of printing in the same ways as eighteenth-century printers. No letterpress printing machines are currently manufactured, which means that all letterpress equipment dates back before 1970, and the majority of presses that survive date from 1890 to 1960, when jobber presses were being produced in highest numbers. Letterpress printing is one of the most user-friendly opportunities for the general public to engage in nineteenth-century life.

Why maintain a museum of nineteenth-century printing equipment for a public audience? In the twenty-first century anyone with access to a personal computer and an inkjet printer, or a photocopier, can with the single click of a button become a printer. The experiences

of this new generation of desktop publishers relate directly to the experiences of printers for the past five hundred years. In her article “Future Prospects for Printing Museums,” Helena Wright states that “learning by doing and seeing how complex mechanisms operate are among the most successful means available to engage audiences...Objects provide significant tangible evidence that informs our understanding of past experience, and they present compelling physical forms that engage visitors. They have a validity borne of reality: in terms of scale and substance, cast iron conveys a certain weight and permanence.”⁴ By seeing the presses in operation, and by participating in the nineteenth-century printing process, members of the public can participate in a common history that connects to local, regional, and national history.

Printing history, therefore, has the potential to engage and provide valuable knowledge to the historical and public fields. The Shakespeare Press Museum, with its collection of presses, type, and printed ephemera, provides these audiences with access to the historical artifacts. Tracing the history of these specific items and the contexts in which they were first utilized and later collected helps to more clearly understand the importance of the history of printing and the relevance of the Shakespeare Press Museum in California history.

⁴ Helena Wright, “Future Prospects for Printing Museums.” *Printing History* 25 no. 2 (2009): 46-47.

Section I: Printing in Nineteenth-Century California

Printers and their presses participated in the establishment and development of California beginning as early as 1834, when the first press arrived in Monterey. The rapid expansion of the trade in the second half of the nineteenth century made the printing press an increasingly important and recognizable feature of the California landscape that would shape the politics, culture, and identity of all Californians. At the same time, the unique relationship between Californian printers and eastern printers and manufacturers illuminates the broader relationship of the “frontiersmen” of the west to the established eastern society. Early printers in California imported equipment, printing traditions, and news from the East. However, nearly immediately after the state was inaugurated into the Union, Californians—including printers—worked to establish their own unique and self-sufficient culture and industry within the state. The booster impulses of Californians were reflected in the printed culture of the California printers, in their publications, newspapers—even their fruit crate labels. In addition to promoting their communities to potential migrants, these printers sought to develop their own printing industry in California, which included type foundries, paper mills, printing and publishing firms, and printing press manufacturers.

The transcontinental railroad and transcontinental telegraph were two of the mid-nineteenth century technological marvels that would unite the east and west into an increasingly connected national market, in which both regions competed to establish markets and customers. And yet, at the same time that California became increasingly connected with the East, Californians also attempted to distance themselves and establish their own local identities of exceptionalism, which were often voiced through their local newspapers.

By understanding the frontier printer we can more clearly visualize the relationships and connections between the frontier territories and states and their eastern counterparts. At no time was the western printer fully isolated from the national printing community—supplies and equipment were imported from the east before paper mills and type foundries were established on the west coast, news and newspapers were imported from the east to be reported in the west, and trade and professional journals connected members of the industry across the nation and sometimes across the world.

The Printing Trade

California printers participated in three types of printing: job printing, book printing, and newspaper and periodical printing. Specialization in one type of printing, however, was not found in the California printing trade during the majority of the nineteenth century. Most printers who arrived in California came with the hopes of running a printing shop in one of the bustling northern gold towns, where they would find steady employment printing deeds, bonds, tickets, broadsides, receipts, and ultimately their own newspaper. Book publishing and printing emerged only later in the cities of San Francisco and Los Angeles, where populations had settled and local support was guaranteed. Printers were settling in California at an ideal time—new types of printing presses, growing national trade, and the unique demands of California businessmen presented California printers with a booming trade in small jobs and local newspapers.

California printers followed the boom-and-bust flow of their local economies. The frontier newspaper was far more common in California than any other western state or territory, primarily due to the diverse population and the unique history of California settlement. The immigrants that flooded the mining fields of Northern California at mid-century were one of the

most literate communities in the United States. Dislocated from family and friends, these migrants demanded news from home—which often arrived in the form of the month-old Eastern newspaper—and national and local news that would connect them with a larger community. Recognizing the need for a local print source, ex-miners turned to newspaper printing as another get-rich-quick scheme. Some of these men were printers in previous lives; others learned on the job. The boom-and-bust cycle of the California economy and mining scene were reflected in the rise and fall of newspapers in California.

The immense importance and success of the frontier newspaper was a reflection on the traditional importance ascribed to the press as proof of the civilization of the frontier. The press united incongruous communities, provided a common reference, and indicated the worth of a fledgling town. Without the traditions of the East, the rapid rise of the newspaper in California would not have occurred.

The first newspaper in the state, the *Californian*, was first printed in 1846. In 1850 there were seven newspapers and by 1890 there were over 490 papers published in California, with at least one newspaper representing each county. Out of all the western states and territories, Colorado, with 239 newspapers, was the closest to approach the number of papers published in California.⁵ However, there were far more newspapers started between 1850 and 1890 than 490, for the typical early Californian newspaper was survived less than three years before the owner moved on to other towns or sold out in pursuit of a more lucrative career.

San Francisco, the center of California politics, economy, and printing industry, illustrated the constant ebb and flow of the California newspaper trade. Over 225 separate newspapers—about thirteen per year—appeared between 1850 and 1870. In certain years the

⁵ U.S. Census records, compiled in Barbara Cloud, *The Business of Newspapers on the Western Frontier*, (Reno: University of Nevada Press: 1992), 7.

number of papers in San Francisco was comparable to that of the large eastern cities. However, nearly half of the newspapers lasted for less than six months.⁶ The surfeit of money, special interests, different ethnicities, and number of individuals with strongly-held points of view all contributed to the boom and bust cycle of the San Francisco printing trade.

Newspapers were typically slight works, limited by access to paper and enough type to set a number of pages. They averaged four pages and were seldom printed in runs exceeding one thousand copies. Profits on newspapers were most easily made by steamer editions, which were large expanded editions that were sold as souvenirs for people just arriving or departing the city, and could therefore command a premium price.⁷ Although newspapers, and their advertising, was a significant source of income, printers often relied on job printing to survive.

Job work was a development of the nineteenth century, when new technologies and increased demand provided printers with contract work from their customers. Job work was generally classified as “the printed items necessary for the functioning of social, commercial, and political enterprises.”⁸ Previous to the nineteenth century, few documents outside of newspapers and books were published, due to the difficulty printing small items on large hand presses, the high cost of printing such work, and the resulting lack of interest of potential customers. By about 1830, however, the invention of smaller presses, aptly titled “jobbing platen presses” provided printers with a new press that could easily print large quantities of smaller items. The demand for billheads, business cards, handbills, advertising material, dated tickets, announcements, and any other small work quickly brought about a great deal of success for printers who ventured into job printing. There was also a demand for personal stationery,

⁶ Robert D. Harlan, “Printing for an Instant City: San Francisco at Mid-Century,” in *Getting the Books Out: Papers of the Chicago Conference on the Book in 19th Century America*, ed. Michael Hackenberg (University Press of the Pacific, 1987), 149.

⁷ Harlan, 151.

⁸ Cloud, 72.

stimulated by the invention of the envelope and the extension of the postal service in the first half of the century.⁹ Job work was often meant to be used, discarded, and forgotten, which left printing historians with few examples of nineteenth century job work. However, it was often the major source of a printer's income.¹⁰

Although some printing shops attempted to separate job printing from newspaper and book printing and to be recognized solely as job printers, the majority of printing offices in nineteenth-century California doubled as job and newspaper offices. Most California newspapers advertised their own jobbing capabilities in their newspapers, emphasizing their access to fancy types and papers and machines suitable for job work (see Fig. 1).¹¹

Newspapers and job printing were the primary work completed by California printers. In San Francisco a few firms also produced periodicals and books, but most were limited by the lack of paper, type, book presses, and the superior work and cheaper prices of the East Coast. There were, however, an extraordinary number of bookshops in San Francisco that imported books from the East Coast and abroad.

Printers

Most early printers in California were previously eastern printers that either came over in the first migrations as miners or came later as printers planning on starting their own press. While in the East printers were struggling with maintaining their strict apprenticeship system in the face of changes to the trade, California and the other western territories occupied a peculiar middle-ground that differed from their colleagues to the east.

⁹ James Moran, *Printing Presses: History and Development from the Fifteenth Century to Modern Times* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 143.

¹⁰ Harlan, 145; Cloud 72.

¹¹ In nearly all of the nineteenth-century California newspapers in the Shakespeare Press Newspaper Collection (see Appendix B) there are advertisements for job work completed on the premises.

From its origins in the mid-fifteenth century letterpress printing had been divided into two branches, typesetting and presswork.¹² Apprentices generally received training to become journeyman printers in one branch, either training to become typesetters or to become pressmen. Printing was a male-dominated trade, although the family-nature of the industry sometimes allowed women to participate. The trade and the technologies employed were fairly consistent with the way the trade was conducted in the age of Gutenberg from the 1450s through the beginning of the nineteenth century—approximately 350 years of a traditional printing trade and apprenticeship system.

The nineteenth century brought with it a revolution in the printing trade, first in presswork, and later in typesetting. The revolution would transform the trade in the same way that Gutenberg's press and moveable type transformed European printing in the thirteenth century and the personal computer and the Internet in the twenty-first century did. The introduction of the steam-powered press in the 1830s replaced thousands of pressmen with boys who could feed the paper and pull out the printed sheets.¹³ The invention of new presses and the increasing mechanical production of printing destroyed the journeyman pressman in the large printing shops in the cities.

Typesetters, however, remained vital to the printing trade. There were no machines to replace the men and women who set the individual sorts of type into text, and so there remained an apprentice system and a value to the journeyman typesetter. At least until 1886, when Ottmar Mergenthaler invented a successful typesetting machine he called the Linotype, as it cast one "line of type" at a time. The same process of elimination that faced pressmen would face

¹² W.J. Rorabaugh, *The Craft Apprentice from Franklin to the Machine Age in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 76.

¹³ Rorabaugh, 77.

typesetters, who had to quickly transition to picking away at the keys of the linotype in order to keep a job in the print shop.

These transformations to the printing trade in the eastern cities did not have the same impact on the trade in the western territories, including California. In fact, many of the displaced journeymen who could not afford to invest in their own print shop in the East—due to the rising cost of the new mechanized presses—turned to the west to find better employment.¹⁴ In the fledgling towns of the west journeymen still could find employment and future success as master printers and pressmen. Fairly quickly in San Francisco printing shops brought mechanized presses, but the majority of California print shops were equipped with presses that required trained pressmen. Californian typesetters also were not replaced as quickly as their counterparts in the east.¹⁵ The rural nature of most of California printing allowed for greater opportunities for displaced tradesmen.

Master printers were printers who had worked their way up the trade from novices to the most skilled and experienced of the printers. They were employing printers, owning their own business and hiring journeymen printers. The journeyman printer, also known as the tramp printer, assisted the master printer on long runs or jobs where extra assistance was needed. His employment was not always guaranteed and as a result the journeyman printer wandered from one print shop to the next, looking for work, for which he was generally paid by the amount of type he set, not by the number of hours he worked. Apprentices were left with the least desirable tasks—cleaning, distributing type, and sometimes the feeding of the press.

In general printers were regarded with respect, as some of the most knowledgeable members of the community on local and national news. They took great pride in their trade and

¹⁴ Rorabaugh, 77.

¹⁵ Roger Levenson, *Women in Printing: Northern California, 1857-1890* (Santa Barbara: Capra Press, 1994), 10.

worked hard at maintaining their role in their society. However, their lives were difficult: ruled by stress, waiting for the next job to come in and then working feverishly on getting the news out or fulfilling a contract. Many daily newspapers operated their presses through the night in order to publish the latest-breaking news. Typesetting and printing were backbreaking, eye-straining, difficult work that was compounded by the physical environment. Print shops were notoriously filthy places: in the 1870s “it was taken for granted that printing should be for the most part carried on in small, low, dark, crowded rooms, with dust-encrusted floors, dim windows never opened, and furniture covered with the accumulated dust of years.”¹⁶ (see fig. 5) Shopfloor ventilation was often poor, gaslamp could consume the oxygen of five men, and the odors of the shop—including benzene, ink, the body odor of many men, cigars, spittoons, missed spittoons, spilled beer, and flatulence—were indescribable.¹⁷ One statistic found that in 1868 the average printer would die at 35, often due to respiratory illnesses such as tuberculosis that spread easily in the close quarters of the print shop.¹⁸

The Print Shop

The majority of presses and supplies came from manufacturers in the east. However, the distance and hazards of transportation often meant unreliable stocks and printers tried to anticipate delays in the crucial supply of paper in their orders. As California settled into statehood, western suppliers soon built inventories that could outfit an entire print shop.¹⁹ The main components of the early California press were the presses, type, paper, ink, and of course, the printers.

¹⁶ Alice Hamilton and Charles H. Verriell, *Hygiene of the Printing Trades*, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics Bulletin No. 209, 1917), 11.

¹⁷ Walker Rumble, *The Swifts: Printers in the Age of Typesetting Races* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2003), 178-179.

¹⁸ Rumble, 181.

¹⁹ Cloud, 88.

Presses

The most visible transformation of the printing trade in the nineteenth century were the giant printing presses. The sturdy wooden hand press that originated in the mid-fifteenth century and remained a relatively unchanging feature of print shops for over three centuries would be superseded in the early nineteenth century by the iron hand press. The iron hand press, with its sturdy frame, quit the wooden screw as a means of providing downward pressure on the platen, replacing it with a joint or lever that would reduce the effort of the printer from wrenching a screw to one “pull” of the press. The most common iron hand press was the ubiquitous Washington hand press, invented by Samuel Rust in 1821, and manufactured in extraordinary numbers by the R. Hoe and Company of New York. The success of the toggle-joint Hoe press inspired many imitators, such as the Cincinnati Type Foundry’s and A.B. Taylor’s Washington hand presses.

The museum currently exhibits two Washington hand presses, a Hoe press (1854) and an A.B. Taylor press (late 1850s). These iron hand presses, although not significantly faster in operation than their wooden predecessors, were capable of producing better-quality work, and would serve as the typical frontier press.²⁰ The iron frame, lighter and stronger than earlier presses, had the additional advantage of being able to be disassembled for shipment. In a large country with uncertain means of transportation, the lighter, transportable press was the most successful press in the first half of the century—by 1870 Hoe & Company had produced over five hundred presses.²¹

²⁰ Moran, 71.

²¹ Stephen O. Saxe, *American Iron Hand Presses* (Madison: Farleigh Dickinson University, 1991), 45.

Long after the hand press was replaced by faster machines for commercial printing in the eighteenth century, the Washington press remained a fixture of many printing shops as a proof press for photo-engravings.

Although the steam-powered printing machine would be used as early as 1810, neither the cylinder press nor the application of steam-power was at first widely adopted, due to the required mechanical skill and the additional energy source required. The potential productivity of the mechanized presses, while useful to the large newspaper and periodical firms, was far too great for rural newspapers with an average circulation of 1,000. Between the hand press and the cylinder machine the bed and platen press served as intermediary. While the bed-and-platen press was based on the same principles as the hand press, it could be mechanically driven. Many of the early San Francisco printing companies relied on these presses for the quantity of work they produced.

The steam-powered cylinder press, first introduced in 1810 by Friedrich Koenig, would launch the transformation of the printing trade.²² While large, multi-cylinder presses would be utilized in the established printing and publishing houses of the East, early California printers relied on smaller, lighter, and easily operated machines. The bigger manufacturers of cylinder presses, once aware of the demand for these “country” presses, began to produce several different models. Of these presses, the Shakespeare Press Museum owns two: the Campbell Country Cylinder Press and the Vaughn Ideal Hand Cylinder Press.

The Campbell Printing Press and Manufacturing Company, established in 1861, was one of the largest producers of country presses in the United States. The Campbell Country Cylinder Press was marketed as one of the most popular country presses because of its simple operation, interchangeable parts that were ideal for distribution of ink and register, and “besides embracing

²² Moran, 123.

these many points of superiority, is the easiest running and cheapest press in the market.” The company made sure to note in their catalog “there is probably no press *so easily handled by inexperienced persons*.”²³

The press could achieve from seven to eight hundred impressions per hour, employing both a press operator and paper feeder. If operated by steam power instead of by hand, the press only required one person to feed paper.²⁴ The total price for the machine, roller moulds, additional equipment, and boxing and shipping was \$1,000 (steam fixtures cost an extra \$50), a reasonable investment for a successful weekly Californian paper.²⁵ (see fig. 3)

The Shakespeare Press Museum’s Campbell Country Cylinder Press was first operated by a weekly paper in San Francisco and later put in storage, where it survived the 1906 earthquake, eventually moving south to print the *Soledad Bee* from 1913 to 1951. It far outstripped the Campbell and Company’s humble guarantee of a fifty-year lifespan. Over a century later it is still used to print broadsides for the Cal Poly Open House.

Another alternative press for the small country printer was the Vaughn Ideal Hand Cylinder Press, which used a cylinder to make an impression, but included the tympan and frisket arrangement common to the hand press. Competitively priced at \$225, the Vaughn Ideal was also marketed as a press “so simple that the veriest novice can set it up, and so light-running that a boy may operate it with ease.”²⁶ (see fig. 4) However, unlike the Campbell Country the Vaughn was could not be run by steam power, and its introduction in 1892 was too late to affect the already dwindling market for the Washington hand press.²⁷

²³ “Campbell Country Cylinder Press” advertisement, Shakespeare Press Museum Archives.

²⁴ Unlike the larger cylinder presses, the Campbell Country Press was not a “web press”—it could not be fed off a roll of paper, only sheets.

²⁵ Campbell Printing Press and Manufacturing Company, *Illustrated Catalog*, New York, 1876, 1974 reprint: 23-24.

²⁶ “Ideal Hand Cylinder Press,” advertisement, Shakespeare Press Museum Archives.

²⁷ Moran, 157.

None of the “legendary behemoths” of nineteenth century printing survived, most likely broken up for scrap, but the small platen jobber still can be found in hundreds of backyard and living-room print shops throughout the United States.²⁸ The persistence of these small presses has to do in part with their usefulness as presses for amateur printers and as small artifacts that can be stored more easily than large presses. Between 1860 and 1880 the number of press-making manufacturers tripled, in large part due to the demand for job presses by print shops and amateur printers alike.²⁹ Possibly the most popular printing press during the last hundred years, various forms of the jobbing platen exist at both ends of the industrial scale, serving both the large industrial print shops and found in the dining rooms of amateurs.³⁰ They would provide the printer with a fast, cheap way of producing printed job work.

While the original intention of the jobber was to free the pressman’s hands by the use of a foot-operated treadle, job presses would soon capitalize on steam and later electric power in speeding up the process. Eventually the jobbing press would become a completely automated machine, from feeding the paper to inking the form and taking the impression.

The revolutionary nature of the jobbing press was illustrated in the statistical comparison between the work of the hand press, which two pressmen could operate to print 250 commercial cards in an hour, compared to a platen press that could be operated by one boy to complete 2,000 cards in an hour.³¹ Multiple color printing was far easier, and the quality of a platen press could rival the quality of any other type of press. The row of treadle-operated and electric platen presses in the museum, manufactured between 1880 and 1904, is a testament to the successful reign of the platen presses, which are still being used for letterpress printing today.

²⁸ Elizabeth M. Harris, *Printing Presses in the Graphic Arts Collection* (Washington D.C.: National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, 1996), 10.

²⁹ Harris, 11.

³⁰ Moran, 143.

³¹ Moran, 153.

Paper was one of the most difficult supplies for the Californian printer to acquire, primarily because it was the quickest-consumed supply in the printing offices. Early frontier newspapers were always struggling with finding a constant supplier; many made do with unusual paper, such as the case of one California newspaper that printed their first edition on cigarillo paper.

Issues with shipping and the limited nature of cotton rag paper motivated westerners and easterners alike to come up with an alternative paper supply. In the second half of the nineteenth century chemically-treated wood pulp paper would enable printers to produce far more printed matter than ever before. Paired with the mechanical speed of the steam presses, the new supply of paper would help give rise to the penny press, the dime novel, the paperback, and the Sunday newspaper edition.

Besides finding a reliable paper supply source, the most challenging problem for early Californian printers was acquiring type. The majority of early California printers opened their shops with secondhand, used type that forced printers to be inventive.³² The first newspaper published in California, the *Californian*, was set using a “spanish font, picked up here in a cloister,” “the types were rusty and all in pi; it was only by scouring that the letters could be made to show their faces; a sheet or two of tin was procured, and these, with a jack knife, were cut into rules and leads.”³³ Lacking enough Ws, the publishers of the newspaper were forced to substitute Vs, and eventually UUs to compensate for the lacking sorts.

An average newspaper required approximate eight hundred pounds of type to set an average paper “going to press.”³⁴ Metal type, made primarily of soft lead, after repeated

³² Cloud, 88.

³³ Pied: a printer’s term meaning the letters are jumbled; Walter Colton, cited in Kemble, 57, 60.

³⁴ Maurice Annenberg, *Type Foundries of America and Their Catalogs*, (Baltimore: Maran Printing Services, 1975), 92.

impressions on the press will wear down and eventually print unreadable text. Printers had to replace about ten percent of their stock of type, ordered as sorts, every year and the length of time it could take to ship type from the East could take six months to a year.³⁵ The potential profits of establishing a foundry on the west coast motivated eastern foundries to send representatives to San Francisco to supply and market their type. Several of these representatives, after becoming situated in the San Francisco printing scene, would eventually establish their own foundries on the west coast.

The first of these foundries, the California Type Foundry, would begin operations in 1867. The demand for new type was so high that the foundry was unable to meet the demand and the owners were forced to manufacture only body type, obtaining display type from the East.³⁶ Additional type foundries were established and in the following decades the boom and bust nature of the California economy would lead foundries to expand, contract, consolidate, and close. The California Type Foundry would eventually be incorporated into the Painter & Company Type Foundry, which remained under its own management until the 1906 earthquake put them out of business. Among the fonts in the Shakespeare Press type collection are those of Painter & Company and the Pacific Type Foundry (see fig. 2).

Casting large type in lead was difficult, due to the properties of the metal, which was difficult to keep in a liquid state for pouring and cooled unevenly to create a resulting uneven surface that was brittle and highly susceptible to damage. Weight was an additional problem: a 10-line capital M would weigh a pound, and resulting complications of shipping and storage difficulties made type larger than 96 point a struggle to produce.³⁷

³⁵ Annenberg, 92.

³⁶ Annenberg, 93.

³⁷ Rob Roy Kelly, *American Wood Type, 1828-1900: notes on the evolution of decorated and large types and comments on related trades of the period* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1969).

Inventors, motivated by the expansion of the commercial printing industry, developed a successful, cheap process by which wood could be made into type. By 1834 wood type was commercially being produced for use throughout the nation. In 1880 J. D. Hamilton of Two Rivers, Wisconsin perfected a veneer type which was sold for less than half the price of earlier wood types.³⁸ The Hamilton Manufacturing Company would eventually become the major wood-type producing company in the United States and would expand to produce type cabinets and other commercial supplies.³⁹

Conclusion

Nineteenth-century technology “rarely stood still.”⁴⁰ The nineteenth century brought about many transformations in printing that enabled the mass production of literature, the success of the small weekly paper, the frontier press, and the increasingly fast communications between Atlantic and Pacific coasts. Many printers felt threatened by the new machines that relied increasingly on mechanical power and unskilled labor. However, this transition was delayed among California printers, who were already familiar with challenges and change within the printing trades. Eventually, the revolution reached California, and the complicated and emotionally vested issues of modernity, automation, and progress would confront printers and challenge long-held assumptions about the profession and the role of the printer in society.

³⁸ Kelly, 33.

³⁹ Kelly, 67.

⁴⁰ Rumble, 13.

PUBLIC BALANCE JOB PRINTING OFFICE.

THE PRINTING OFFICE ATTACHED TO THIS JOURNAL
BEING FURNISHED WITH
THE LARGEST ESTABLISHMENT
Of materials, Type, Steam and Hand Presses, &c., of
the best and most modern styles
NOW IN CALIFORNIA,
IS PREPARED TO EXECUTE, WITH NEATNESS AND DESPATCH, AND ON
THE MOST FAVORABLE TERMS,

Job Printing of every description,

From a Business Card to an Octavo Volume.

“Posters” of all sizes, up to the Largest Mammoth,

WITH APPROPRIATE CUTS, ORNAMENTS, ETC.

LAW BLANKS, BILL HEADS, BILLS OF LADING,

AND ALL KINDS OF

LETTER PRESS & FANCY JOB WORK

DONE IN A SUPERIOR MANNER,

From an assortment of Fancy Job Type and Materials

Unsurpassed for Extent, Variety and Beauty !!!

Figure 1. Advertisement for job printing in *Public Balance*, 1851

Figure 2. Type specimen of 34pt. Antique Wide,
Painter & Co. Type Foundry, San Francisco

THE CAMPBELL PRINTING PRESS AND MANUFACTURING COMPANY.

CAMPBELL'S COUNTRY PRESS,

WITH RACK AND SCREW AND TABLE DISTRIBUTION, TYMPAN NIPPER, AND
REEL RODS IN THE CYLINDER.

OUR Country Press, having been before the public for the past fourteen years, has already established for itself a reputation as the simplest, having the fewest working parts; the most durable, being constructed of the best material and by the most experienced workmen to standard gauges and templates, thus making all its parts interchangeable, which for repairs is very desirable; it is also perfect in the distribution of ink, as well as in its register, as is shown by its almost exclusive use on colored label work. And besides embracing these many points of superiority, it is the easiest running and cheapest press in the market.

When properly cared for, there is no reason (judging from the past) why it should not last fifty years, or even longer. As to the fine quality of the work it does, there can be no question. This is conceded by all fair men. The saving on paper, ink, rollers and type are largely in its favor over any press of any other builder, regardless of price.

There is probably no press so easily handled by inexperienced persons. We have sent them to the Arabs, the Japanese, the Mexicans and the Africans, none of whom ever had seen a power printing-press. Yet they set them up with ease, and ran them with profit. We have recently furnished one of our Country Presses for an office in South America, to take the place of a new ordinary Country Cylinder Press made by one of our competitors, and which, after a year's vain endeavor, the purchasers had failed to get properly together, and, rather than pay the heavy expense of a man to go and set it running, and then take the chance of its getting out of order, preferred to make it a total loss, and put in a Campbell Press.

On this press from seven to eight hundred impressions per hour are easily turned off by hand, and in a superior manner.

39 BEEKMAN ST., NEW YORK. WYTHE AVE., HEWES AND PENN STS., BROOKLYN, E. D.

(231)

3. Campbell's Country Press advertisement, 1871

Ideal Hand Cylinder Press

The type form on this press is stationary. The Cylinder is moved over the tympan by link belts running over sprocket wheels at each end of the press, and it prints a sheet at each forward or backward movement. The cylinder is made of steel, and is held firmly to the tracks by truck-wheels which run in a groove on the under side of the tracks. The boxes which hold the cylinder at each end, and in which it revolves, are connected by a stretcher rod running above the cylinder, which prevents side friction. The impression is regulated by four screws—two on each side—which raise or depress the bearers on which the cylinder runs. An effective inking apparatus is supplied, but is extra. A number of Ideal Presses are in use, and intending purchasers may gather how satisfactory they are to the users by reading the following extracts from a great many commendatory letters received.

"My wife ran off 300 an hour on it the first day it was put up."***"With it our inexperienced pressman has made the following speed: 750 impressions in 75 minutes; 475 in one hour; 100 in 11 minutes. We run a regular lick of 100 every 15 minutes, or 400 per hour."***"The press is so simple that the veriest novice can set it up, and so light-running that a boy may operate it with ease."***"It is far superior to my old Washington for speed and quality of work."

No. 1	8-column folio or 5-column quarto; size of bed 28½ × 43 inches				\$200 00
No. 2	9-column folio or 6-column quarto; size of bed 33½ × 48½ inches				225 00
No. 1	Floor space 31 × 55	Floor weight 700 pounds	Shipping weight 975 pounds		
No. 2	Floor space 35 × 60	Floor weight 800 pounds	Shipping weight 1100 pounds		
Frisket for either size furnished to order only \$6 00 Extra tympan covered, for either size					\$7 00
Prices quoted are f. o. b. Factory					

Figure 3. Campbell's Country Press advertisement, 1871

Figure 5. "Press Room, 4 A.M." San Luis Obispo *Morning Tribune*, 1890.
Courtesy Special Collections, Cal Poly.

Section II: The History of Shakespeare Press and Museum

The expansion and transformation of printing in the nineteenth century continued into the twentieth century. The new typesetting machines, increasingly larger and more complex presses, and new methods of reproduction challenged the traditional system and structure of the printing trade. In fact, there was no longer a printing “trade”—the turn of the century heralded in the printing industry. The new industry challenged the traditional definition of what it meant to be a “printer.” The apprenticeship system, the journeyman printer, the printer-publisher, and the small-town weekly were either forced to adjust to or would disappear in the new nature of the printing industry.

An ex-printer-publisher traveling through Northern California would witness the challenges and conflict that the transformation of the printing industry would create among local printers and publishers. Charles L. Palmer recognized the historic value of the out-dated presses that were moving to the trash barrels or the basements of print shops and began to collect this equipment. Palmer would go on to amass one of the largest collections of late nineteenth-century printing presses, type, and assorted printing equipment on the West Coast. His acquisitions would eventually become the original collection of Cal Poly’s Shakespeare Press Museum.⁴¹

“Shakespeare:” The Early Years of Charles Leicester Palmer

On November 4, 1896, only ten years after Ottmar Mergenthaler patented his revolutionary Linotype, Charles Leicester Palmer was born in Pigeon, Vandenberg County,

⁴¹ *A note on the methodology:* The majority of the sources used in this section can be found in the Shakespeare Press Museum archives. Many of the sources that reference Charles Palmer are journal and newspaper clippings that Palmer, or more likely his wife Mary, compiled in a scrapbook and then duplicated for the museum in the 1960s.

Indiana. Charles was the first of four children born to Lucy Perkins Boalt Palmer and Asa Gardner Palmer, a “railroad man” for the G.F. & P.A.⁴² In 1908 the family migrated to Soquel, California and by 1910 Asa Palmer was listed as “Farmer, Fruit” in the U.S. Federal Census. The young Charles Palmer would remain a resident of California for the rest of his life.

While attending San Francisco Polytechnic High School, Palmer acquired his life-long nickname “Shakespeare,” due to his love for writing poetry. The 1918 *Polytechnic Yearbook* included both a poem by Palmer and a caricature of “Shakespeare” Palmer (see fig. 6). The same year Palmer would join the Coast Artillery School at Fort Monroe, Virginia. Private Palmer was awarded his certificate in December 1918, one month after World War I concluded.

Between 1918 and 1934 Palmer would work in newspaper shops throughout Northern California, which provided him with the necessary on-the-job training and an appreciation for letterpress printing. From 1918 to 1920 Palmer worked for the Associated Press reading telephone ponies on the graveyard shift, served as city editor of the *San Mateo News-Leader*, and was a stringer simultaneously for the *San Jose Mercury*, *Oakland Tribune*, and *Palo Alto Times*. During this transitory period Palmer married Helen Olinger and by 1920 they were living in San Mateo.

The City Newspaperman’s Classic Dream

In 1920 the Palmers moved north of San Francisco to the town of Ukiah, in Mendocino County, where Palmer would “take a shot at the city newspaperman’s classic dream, running a country weekly.”⁴³ Palmer and his business partner Mayron R. Douglass, a printer Palmer met when they both worked for the *San Mateo News Leader*, each contributed five hundred dollars to purchase the *Ukiah Times-Journal*, a small weekly newspaper that served Ukiah and Mendocino

⁴² 1900 U.S. Federal Census.

⁴³ *Western Printer and Lithographer*, July 1954 (np).

County. The previous owner of the newspaper, Dr. John S. Hogshead, had managed the paper from afar, overseeing the newspaper from Covelo, about sixty miles north. The newspaper's editor, Anna M. Reed, who presumably ran the paper for Hogshead, explained that he received an "important Government Appointment" that "with a large practice, and other business interests there, had made it impossible for him, without much sacrifice, to take personal control of this publication."⁴⁴ Hogshead had only owned the paper for a year.

The young Palmer, only twenty-four, took over the duties of editor while Douglass ran the presses. Palmer stated "we do not expect to create a furor by our efforts, nor will we sit with folded hands while the world marches along the road to progress, but with diligent effort and steadfast purpose we will work with you for the benefit of all."⁴⁵ Ominously, on the same day Palmer and Douglass became owners of the *Times-Journal*, they published an article entitled "Suspended newspapers":

Until within recent years newspapers never quit—they just passed on from one owner to another. But now publishers fall in business, just like other business men. Publishing has become a matter of first importance in the nation, and likewise its hazards have increased. The time has passed when you can take a dull boy and "make an editor outen of him," as the poet Will Carleton put it. Twenty-five hundred newspapers have suspended publication since July 1918, but still the post office department cries savagely for higher rates for second-class mail matter. They lay their deficits at the door of the publisher, and even try shifting some \$58,000,000 annual loss in the rural free delivery service to the newspapers.

The small town weekly was proving little match for the large dailies of the big cities.

Palmer's paper, like most small-town newspapers of the early twentieth century, was a weekly paper, published every Wednesday. The six-paged publication was only \$2.50 for subscription a year. Unfortunately for Palmer, Douglass quit their partnership after four months. The June 30, 1920 publication of the newspaper listed Palmer as sole owner and editor of the

⁴⁴ *Ukiah Times-Journal*, March 24, 1920: 2

⁴⁵ *ibid.*

newspaper. Palmer, although he had worked for newspapers for all of his career, was unfamiliar with the practice of printing, and found it necessary to operate both newspaper and job presses and set type by hand. In a later interview he claimed that he was taught how to print by John J. Cullen, an ex-baseball player and current printer who “was never very willing to teach anyone. So the way I learned was to buy him a bottle of Irish whiskey. That made him talkative if I kept asking enough questions.”⁴⁶

To compound the problem, Palmer ruptured his appendix and was hospitalized. He gave his power of attorney to a man who soon sank the *Times Journal* into a “hopeless quagmire of obligations.”⁴⁷ On January 21st in a brief editorial on the front page of the paper entitled “Times-Journal to suspend publication” Palmer explained the indefinite suspension of the paper. Among several reasons, including the departure of one of the printers to take a position in a Fresno paper and the lack of printers to replace him, as well as the loss of their shop space with “no vacant stores of sufficient size to accommodate the machinery of this office, the *Times-Journal* cannot move, and as there is no printer there can be no work done, so it naturally follows that the *Times-Journal* must suspend publication until it can find a printer and locate a large office.”⁴⁸ The *Ukiah Times-Journal*, however, would never run again. Palmer would not pay off his debts for several years, long after he had left Ukiah. Misfortune remained—Helen Palmer, after giving birth to their son Charles, Jr., died. There was little left in Ukiah to keep Palmer.

So as did his printer before him, Palmer headed to Fresno. Between 1922 and 1934 he remained in the newspaper business, working for the *Fresno Bee* as a copyreader in 1922, the

⁴⁶ *California Publisher*, August 1955, p. 10-11. In the 1920 census John Cullen was listed as 68 years old, widowed, of Ukiah, and a printer for a newspaper.

⁴⁷ *California Publisher*, August 1955: 10-11.

⁴⁸ *Ukiah Times-Journal*, 21 January 5, 1921:, 1.

Fresno Morning Republican from 1923 to 1929 as financial and agricultural editor, and returned to the *Fresno Bee* in 1931. In 1929 Palmer married Mary V. Eiland.

In 1934 Palmer joined the public relations staff of San Joaquin Valley Light and Power Corporation, soon to merge with Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E), as a publicity writer. As an advertising man and publicity writer, Palmer would be responsible for traveling to newspapers throughout California to market the company. In this role he continued his relationship with the newspaper business, and the relationship would soon yield unexpected profits.

“Collector of Old Fashioned Types and Printing Presses”

While traveling between newspapers in central and northern California Palmer witnessed the transformation of the small newspaper as print shops began to replace old equipment and type with newer presses and typesetting machines. The old equipment was placed in storage, melted down, or broken down for reuse. Palmer, with his background in newspapers and his love of California and printing history, proved to be the perfect candidate for collector of old fashioned types and printing presses.

Palmer began collecting equipment as early as 1938, when he acquired an 1870s Palmer & Rey jobbing press from the *Templeton Advance*. Palmer claimed that the press had sat so long in the front window of the *Advance* office that “the rollers had frozen to the inkplate. I spent three weeks with an oil stone on that plate.”⁴⁹ An early business card of the Shakespeare Press dated the establishment of the press as September 30, 1939, featuring Palmer’s personal logotype of the shaky spear. Between 1934 and 1964 Palmer would maintain a backyard printing shop full of type, presses, and additional equipment that was donated by newspapermen, publishers, and printers who recognized the value of the old presses.

⁴⁹ *California Publisher*, (August 1955): 10-11.

In 1939 Palmer purchased his first fonts of type during an auction at the S.C. Longwell Print Shop in Fresno. Instead of purchasing new and modern types, Palmer worked hard to acquire fonts from the nineteenth and turn of the century. In 1941, he purchased a rare font of floriated type and additional fonts from the *Fresno Japanese Times*, which had been taken over by the Alien Property Custodians.⁵⁰ Palmer stated, “That made me think, that if type like that turned up in a shop like that, there must be a lot of beautiful type lying around that should not be lost or mishandled.”⁵¹ His collection would include fonts dated back to 1854, representing printing development in California’s first hundred years.

In 1947 Palmer completed 147 copies of *The Shakespeare Press Specimen Book*, which showcased the rare wood and metal fonts in his growing collection (see fig. 9). The book was extremely popular among printers, and Palmer offered the book and the cost of freight in exchange for old fonts of type. He was very careful with his old fonts, using the type only to pull a single proof that could be used to make new plates to use in the old presses. By 1954 he had 250 fonts of type, representing 175 different typefaces ranging from 3 pt. to 10 line, including hand-carved ivory-faced wood type from Sonora *Union Democrat*, hand-carved 1840s horsehide type from Grass Valley *Union*, and wood type with celluloid veneer from Gilroy *Dispatch*.⁵²

Among the equipment Palmer gathered was an A.B. Taylor & Company Washington Hand Press, a Curtis & Mitchell Columbian, Palmer & Rey jobber, and early model Peerless. He also inventoried a foot-powered stapler, Jewel Paper Cutter, lead cutters, and a Dr. Miles Proof Press.

With the antique type and jobs Palmer would soon begin to produce work for friends, relatives, and community organizations. Active in both the Masons and E Clampus Vitus,

⁵⁰ *Western Printer and Lithographer*, July 1954 (np).

⁵¹ *Western Printer and Lithographer*, July 1954 (np).

⁵² *Western Printer and Lithographer*, July 1954 (np).

Palmer designed programs and announcements for both organizations. He printed centennial announcements, displays for advertising agencies, and reproduction proofs for use in anniversary editions of newspaper. However, he consistently refused to accept commercial printing of any kind.

In 1950 Palmer contributed a few of his presses and volunteered his time to the Centennial Exposition of California Journalism in San Diego. In an “Early California Printing Plant” Palmer illustrated the hand press. During the opening speech by Governor Earl Warren a photo was taken with the “newest type of high-speed camera” that produced a negative in print form and a one-page special edition was printed on the hand press before Warren left the podium. At the Monterey Centennial, commemorating the publication of the first newspaper in California, Palmer demonstrated the hand press for publishers and editors. Only seventy-five years earlier, men and women in the same profession would have been running such a press.

From Palmer to Poly

Palmer decided relatively early on that he wanted to find a site to store his press after he no longer could maintain it. In 1944 the California Newspaper Publishers Association (CNPA) agreed to sponsor the Shakespeare Press. In exchange for sponsorship and the publicity it afforded the press, Palmer agreed to provide in his will for Shakespeare Press to be bequeathed to CNPA after his death. The association, looking for a repository for the collection, approached California State Polytechnic College in 1947. Cal Poly had only just established a Printing Engineering Department in 1946, which offered Bachelor of Science degree in printing. The 1946-47 Course Catalog stressed that the four-year program would qualify students

to hold responsible positions in most branches of the allied trades of the printing industry. A graduate will have sufficient skill in all phases of printing and an adequate knowledge of management practices, so that he can advance rapidly to

foremanship positions. A graduate is also well qualified to operate his own print shop, or to publish a small rural newspaper in connection with a job printing plant.⁵³

CNPA found Cal Poly's printing department an ideal location for Palmer's collection, primarily due to the department's focus on preparing students for rural newspapers, the same places from which Palmer originally acquired most of his collection.

In November of 1947 Larry Freeman, publisher of the *Delano Record* and member of CNPA, approached Cal Poly President Julian A. McPhee with the offer. Freeman noted that Palmer's one stipulation was "that the type be kept up and kept in a place where, when a member of the CNPA would want a few lines of type set for use on historic occasions, he could order them, then have a cut made from the proof." Larry Freeman wrote "your school for country printers would be the most likely and best place in the state. I believe it would be a fine thing to have in your plant, where no doubt it could be used as part of the course."⁵⁴

Four days after Freeman proposed the idea, George P. Couper wrote to McPhee, advising him to accept the bequest.⁵⁵ Although there was no room for the collection at the time, Couper felt confident that there would be space available by the time the collection would transfer to Cal Poly: "Mr. Palmer might live for a long time, and we do not have to face this space requirement at the moment...The interested of newspaper publishers in the 'School for Country Printers' here is increasing each week. I am sure that the addition of this historic material to the plant here would attract the interest and attention of some publishers who might otherwise not have any

⁵³ California State Polytechnic College, "Bulletin California State Polytechnic College San Luis Obispo: Circular of Information and Announcement of Courses, 1947-1948," *California State Polytechnic College Bulletin* 27, no. 4 (August 1947): 186.

⁵⁴ Larry Freeman to Julian A. McPhee, November 10, 1947, SPM Archives.

⁵⁵ In 1947 George P. Couper was serving as Assistant to the Chief of the State Bureau of Agricultural Education, a division of the State Department of Education, with headquarters at Cal Poly. In the 1930s Couper was listed on the Cal Poly Agriculture Department faculty, Farm English and Publications, but he originally worked as a newspaperman from The Dalles, Oregon. *California State Polytechnic College Circular of Information for 1947; History of Agricultural Education*, 1954; 1930 US Census.

direct contact with the school.”⁵⁶ Couper recognized that the CNPA might be a potential source of income for a fledgling printing department in a school dominated by agricultural and engineering students.

Palmer visited Cal Poly shortly after the offer was first proposed, on the evening of Saturday, November 15th. He arrived unannounced and “breezed through the printing department,” department chair Burt Fellows wrote. “Mr. Palmer is a tall, wiry individual with mustache and goatee, long black coat and Homberg hat, who reminds me of Buffalo Bill. He appears hale and hearty, and not likely to be the subject of an obituary soon.”⁵⁷ The recommendation by Fellows proved enough of a stimulus for McPhee to respond to Freeman and accept the offer.

Following the acceptance the Cal Poly Printing Department, Palmer, CNPA, and the printing department began a correspondence that would span several years as the collection grew and Palmer’s equipment was relocated to Cal Poly. Eventually, some equipment would bypass Palmer’s backyard printing shop and move directly from donor to Cal Poly. In June 1949 Cal Poly hosted the second Pacific Regional Conference on Printing Education. Among such presentations as “What Schools Should Do in Preparing Men for the Graphic Arts Industry” and “Responsibilities of School, Student, and Employer in Meeting Demands of the Printing Industry,” Palmer gave an address on the “History of Type and Printing in California.”

In the summer of 1950 Palmer began shipping presses to the school, probably by the Railway Express Agency. The first of the presses to arrive were the A.B. Taylor Washington Hand Press, Curtis & Mitchell Jobber, and the Miles Nervine Proof Press.⁵⁸ Although there were

⁵⁶ George P. Couper to J. A. McPhee, November 14, 1947, Shakespeare Press Museum Archives, California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo (hereafter cited as SPM Archives).

⁵⁷ Bert Fellows to McPhee, McCorkle, Kennedy, and Couper, November 20, 1947, SPM Archives.

⁵⁸ Charlie Palmer to A.M. Fellows, August 17, 1950, SPM Archives.

some issues with finding space for the printing equipment, the collection continued to grow throughout the next fourteen years. Palmer retained enough printing equipment to continue to operate the Shakespeare Press.

On Saturday, April 18, 1964 Palmer, still active in the printing industry, headed from his home in Fresno to attend the Printers Late Watch dinner commemorating the fifty-eighth anniversary of the San Francisco earthquake and fire. In the early morning hours of Sunday Palmer passed away of a heart attack in his room at the San Francisco Press Club. As a testament to his significance to the printers of California, in the following weeks many California newspapers published obituaries on Palmer recognizing the important work he initiated in his Shakespeare Press.

In late May, Mary Palmer wrote to Bert Fellows, asking him to begin transferring equipment and type from Palmer's printing shop. In June, Fellows recruited several printing students to assist in the transfer. Along with the equipment, the students were to pick up books on printing to be housed in the museum, for Palmer "specifically stated that these books are not to go to Cal Poly Library but that they are to go to the Cal Poly Printing Department."⁵⁹

In the mid-1960s the museum, known as "Ye Old Print Shop," continued to grow as more individuals and companies learned that Cal Poly was functioning as a repository for antique printing equipment. As the equipment continued to arrive, students in the Printing Engineering and Management Department refurbished and restored much of the equipment. An article in the Mustang Daily stated that "every Friday evening, the printers gathered for a 2 to 3 hour 'work' session."⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Mary Palmer to A.M. Fellows, May 29, 1964, SPM Archives.

⁶⁰ *El Mustang* Special Edition, 1965.

The museum was officially dedicated as the Shakespeare Press Museum on April 30, 1966, during the sixty-sixth annual Poly Royal, however the museum would not be opened to the public until May 24, 1969. (see fig. 10). The students operating the museum set an early precedent for running the museum during Poly Royal and Cal Poly Open House, a tradition that continues into the twenty-first century. They also emphasized the role of students in operating and maintaining the museum and created the position of student curator and “Friends of the Shakespeare Press,” the volunteer team that staffs the museum.

Publications

The students of the museum published three monographs of significant scope that recorded the collections and informed a wide audience of the work of the museum. A copy of each of these publications is annotated below and can be found in the museum.

Yaras, Arron M. *The Shakespeare Press Museum*. San Luis Obispo: Printing Technology and Management, [1968?].

The earliest known publication from the museum, utilized as an educational brochure and as a catalog of equipment. Curator Arron Yaras noted “only a small percentage of the students in the department work in the museum, but those who do feel it is worthwhile.” The brochure catalogs twenty items and is especially useful as a source for determining what person or company donated the equipment.

Shaw, George, Victor Strandskov, and Arron Yaras. *Faces of Antiquity*. San Luis Obispo: Shakespeare Press Museum, 1969.

This forty-seven-page long type specimen book proved to be one of the most popular publications of the museum. As a joint senior project three students completed a catalog of over two hundred of the antique faces found in the museum. In their introduction Shaw, Strandskov, and Yaras outline the “Shakespeare Press Reproduction Service” whereby commercial printers and advertising agencies could request reproduction proofs of work set in one of the typefaces included in the specimen book. Although the students did not charge a fee, they anticipated donations that would go toward scholarships offered by Mat Pica Pi, the student printing organization associated with the museum. Correspondence and clippings in the Shakespeare Press Museum archives indicates the overwhelming show of interest and support from printers, librarians, and historical organization.

We are young printers just getting out of school, but we do find the past quite interesting. There is so much to be proud of in our industry’s past that it is a shame that we, as an industry, haven’t stopped to look at it. You might say that the industry is moving so fast that you just do not have time to stop to look back. This is bad, because if you do love your field of work you should want to see how it got where it is and where it is going.⁶¹

Rainville, Lowell J. *The Shakespeare Press Museum: A Collection of Nineteenth Century Printing Type and Equipment*. San Luis Obispo: Friends of the Shakespeare Press Museum, 1978.

To complement the type specimen book and to expand on the early brochure, Rainville and the Friends of the Shakespeare Press Museum created a monograph that examines the printing collection of the museum. For each press or piece of printing equipment Rainville included a brief paragraph on its origins, uses, or manufacturer. The type was set on

⁶¹ Shaw, *Faces of Antiquity*, ix.

phototypesetting equipment using a font made for the museum by Brian Lawler and the book was printed by offset lithography. It sold for \$ 8.95.⁶²

In the following twenty years several more publications were printed at the Shakespeare Press Museum, including *The Penetrating Light: Fine Printing and the Mind of the Artist* (1986), an anthology of quotes on printing and design; *San Simeon Revisited: the Correspondence Between Julia Morgan and William Randolph Hearst* (1987), in collaboration with Kennedy Library Associates; and two books of poems by author Toni Wynn.

In addition to these publications, the Friends of the Shakespeare Press Museum continued a long tradition of job printing and ceaselessly produced small runs of posters, greeting cards, broadsides, postcards, pamphlets, and other commissioned work. This tradition continues into the twenty-first century, where letterpress printing is gathering international support in job work and limited edition artists' books. The curators of the museum maintain the ideals of Palmer and continue to educate the public in the history of California printing.

Palmer's Vision

Charles Palmer was certainly not the first person to envision a collection of antique printing equipment and type, however, in California he was one of the earliest and most successful of these collectors. His success was due in part to his familiarity and involvement in the California printing industry, being present at the right time and place, and having the support of printers and publishers. Palmer was motivated to collect equipment that was in danger of being forgotten, or worse, of being destroyed. He recognized the historical importance of the type and equipment and worked hard to find and protect that equipment. He found his collection

⁶² Aug. 10, 1978 press release "Press Museum Book Published by Cal Poly Students," SPM Archives

a permanent home where curators would protect and appropriately use the equipment and type. He was involved in collecting equipment at the same time transformations in the printing industry were causing printers in small printing shops and newspapers to dispose of old equipment, in the area of California—the “Mother Lode” region—where the small newspapers were the most prolific historically in the state.

Palmer’s early career as a printer enabled him to sort through and recognize the important pieces for collection and enabled him to refurbish and maintain the presses. His collection was not just a static assortment of objects but a working printing shop. He passed this knowledge of and desire to keep working the presses of the nineteenth century on to the future Shakespeare Press Museum and its student staff. Finally, the willingness of the owners of the presses to donate them and the support of the CNPA both enabled Palmer to succeed at his endeavor.

Palmer’s collection was established as a museum earlier than most collections of the same sort. Today the three largest museums of printing history in the United States are: the International Printing Museum in Carson, California (established 1988); the Museum of Printing History in Austin, Texas (founded 1979); and the Museum of Printing in North Andover, Massachusetts (1978).⁶³ In size and scope of collections the Shakespeare Press Museum is smaller than these museums, which continue to amass their holdings and widen the span of their focus to range from Gutenberg to the early twentieth century. But by maintaining a relatively narrow scope—nineteenth century California printing history—the Shakespeare Press Museum curators are able to examine in detail one area of printing and California history.

In their early efforts, Palmer and his colleagues far preceded the American Printing History Association (APHA), the earliest printing history association in the United States.

⁶³ The Smithsonian’s collection of printing presses and type was placed in storage when the Hall of Graphic Arts closed in December 2003. Previously it had served as the largest collection of wooden and iron hand presses in the United States.

Founders of the APHA wrote of their hopes to see “the establishment of local (perhaps county) museums in great number throughout the country” and “to absorb and keep locally the historic printing artifacts of the community, for the benefit of the local community,” encouraging “the creation of personal or hobby presses and print shops, as (among other things) a way to absorb letterpress equipment and keep it in use.”⁶⁴ The APHA already had the support of one collector, who had anticipated their hopes thirty-five years earlier.

⁶⁴ *The Printer*, 1 (January 1975): 2.

The following is a list of the individuals and companies who donated type and equipment to Charles Palmer⁶⁵

<i>Alta Advocate,</i>	<i>Lompoc Record</i>
<i>Arroyo Grande Herald-Recorder</i>	<i>Los Banos Enterprise</i>
<i>Arvin Tiller</i>	<i>Madera News</i>
<i>Atwater Signal</i>	<i>Madera Tribune</i>
<i>Brentwood News</i>	<i>Mariposa Gazette</i>
<i>California Vorw aerts</i>	<i>Merced Express</i>
<i>Chowchilla News</i>	<i>Midway Driller, Taft</i>
<i>Clovis Tribune</i>	<i>Modesto Journal</i>
<i>Coalinga Record</i>	<i>Oakdale Enterprise</i>
<i>Corcoran Journal</i>	<i>Oilfield (Oildale?) News</i>
<i>Crown Printing,</i>	<i>Orange Cove News</i>
<i>Delano Record</i>	<i>Orosi Courier</i>
<i>Dos Palos Star</i>	<i>Paso Robles Journal</i>
<i>Empire News</i>	<i>Pleasanton Times</i>
<i>Exeter Sun</i>	<i>Riverbank News</i>
<i>Fowler Ensign</i>	<i>Riverdale Press</i>
<i>Fresno Clarion</i>	<i>S.C. Longwell, Fresno</i>
<i>Fresno Labor Citizen</i>	<i>San Juan Mission News</i>
<i>Fresno Shopper</i>	<i>San Luis Obispo Independent</i>
<i>Galt Herald</i>	<i>San Luis Obispo Telegram-Tribune</i>
<i>Gilroy Dispatch</i>	<i>San Ynez Valley News, Solvang</i>
<i>Grass Valley Union</i>	<i>Sanger Herald</i>
<i>Greenfield News</i>	<i>Santa Maria Advertiser</i>
<i>Gustine Standard</i>	<i>Santa Maria Times</i>
<i>Hollister Free Lance</i>	<i>Selma Enterprise</i>
<i>J. Salmon, Fresno</i>	<i>Soledad Bee</i>
<i>J.G. Barrett, Redwood City</i>	<i>Sonora Union Democrat</i>
<i>Japanese Times, Fresno</i>	<i>The Cambrian</i>
<i>Kerman News</i>	<i>Tuolumne Independent</i>
<i>L.M. Knapp, Lodi</i>	<i>Tuolumne Prospector</i>
<i>Le Grand News</i>	<i>Turlock Journal, Lowell E. Jessen</i>
<i>Lemoore Advance</i>	<i>Visalia Times-Delta</i>
<i>Livingston Chronicle</i>	<i>Watsonville Printery</i>

⁶⁵ Compiled from Charles L. Palmer, *The Shakespeare Press Specimen Book of Old Fashioned Type* (Fresno: The Shakespeare Press, 1947).

Figure 6. Caricature of Charles Palmer in the *Polytechnic Journal*, Polytechnic High School, San Francisco, 1918. Courtesy Shakespeare Press Museum, Cal Poly.

Figure 7. Charles Palmer printing on Washington Hand Press, circa 1950s. Courtesy Shakespeare Press Museum, Cal Poly.

Figure 8. Charles Palmer working at the platen press in his backyard print shop, circa 1950s.
Courtesy Shakespeare Press Museum, Cal Poly.

Figure 9. Title page of Charles Palmer's *Specimen Book of Old Fashioned Type*, 1947.
Courtesy Shakespeare Press Museum, Cal Poly.

Figure 10. Dedication of the Shakespeare Press Museum, April 1966.
Courtesy Shakespeare Press Museum, Cal Poly.

Section III: Reviewing the Thesis Project

The previous two sections examine the role of printing in early California and the history of the Shakespeare Press Museum. They indicate the value of the collection by placing the equipment and the creation of the Shakespeare Press into the context of the California printing industry. The goal of this thesis project, in addition to illustrating the historic value of nineteenth century printing and of the Shakespeare Press Museum collections, is to continue the tradition of promoting and facilitating educational and research opportunities through the collections.

The same personal-computer revolution that is transforming the face of the printing industry—yet another revolution within the industry—provides the museum with a revolutionary method for outreach. By creating and participating in websites, blogs, databases, and online communities the students assisting in the museum make the museum accessible to a far larger audience than could otherwise be possible. Although the audience of many of these sites is primarily printers and printing historians, there is also a potential audience among the public, who are unacquainted with the technology and history of printing. By creating accessible and intelligible meanings for this audience the museum can serve as an important educator of printing history.

In order to write public history it is necessary to have the material objects organized and accessible to work with. Many of these objects are ephemeral in nature. As physical objects meant to be consumed and then disposed of, they were not designed to survive the decades. But by employing archival knowledge and best practices to care for these objects we can better protect the products of the printing press. Archival and organizational best practices are employed to organize two manuscript collections, our library of printing references, and our type

collection. In addition, I archived the records of the museum to make them more accessible and more useful to researchers and the curators of the museum.

In this final section I describe the work I have completed within the museum to make it increasingly accessible, archivally sound, and more useful and relevant to a number of varied audiences. Some of these projects will be ongoing for several years, others have proved difficult to implement, and the success of others has been surprising.

In the Museum

The museum has been housed in Room 116 of the Graphic Communications Building (Building 26) for over forty years, since the building was built in the mid-1960s. When the collection was first moved in to the building it was already considered a large collection—and since then it has continued to grow. The problem of space is a constant issue. Several of the printing presses cannot be used due to the constricted space; for example, one of the iron hand presses cannot be run due to a cabinet of type cases in front of the handle. Other cabinets are empty of type cases—although there are more than enough fonts of type to fill them—because they are located in inaccessible locations. It is difficult to manage tour groups of more than twenty visitors, or letterpress classes of more than fifteen, due to the constricted quarters and limited workspace. Furthermore, the museum has become a dumping ground for the department's out-dated equipment. Our collections continue to grow, but the physical space of the museum does not continue to grow with them.

Over the past year I have worked with faculty and curators to determine how to re-organize the physical space of the museum to make it more accessible to tourists as well as printers. The fact that we run the site as both a museum and a printing shop creates several challenges that we have yet to fully confront. Should we remove items of historical relevance to

increase the space for printing work? Should the presses be allowed to fall into nonuse because the space is too constricting? Over the past year I have revised my own belief in the relevance of the equipment in the museum, shifting from believing in the *more is better* approach to the opposite. We do not need three guillotine paper cutters and four perforators in the museum, even if they are each unique. If we can find a place to store the equipment this would clear up a significant amount of space in the museum. However, storage and transport of equipment has as of yet proved largely impossible. Until we find a place to store the extra equipment, plans for re-organizing the museum are placed on hold. This, I believe, is the most unfortunate problem that we are confronted with in the museum—the lack of space for tours and work complicates the ease of teaching classes, opening the studio, and providing tours.

However, we are attempting to deal with the problem in alternative ways until we can find a way of moving the extra equipment into storage. I have begun to fill the blank walls with student-produced work and informative panels for visitors. I have rewritten the tour to facilitate the layout of the museum. I am designing a brochure that visitors can use to navigate the museum without a tour guide. These efforts are part of a long-term student effort to revitalize and restore the museum. It is time we dusted off the old equipment and put it to some use.

Shakespeare Press Museum Online

While re-arranging the physical museum has proved to be a significant challenge, navigating and organizing cyberspace was in many ways far easier. Although there were difficulties along the way—primarily due to my lack of familiarity with web-related issues such as html, web design, and managing digital files—the increased accessibility to the museum enabled us to get around the issue of the physical museum by making it accessible to a worldwide audience.

The Shakespeare Press Museum website

The museum website is the most difficult area of our online museum to manage. Created by Cynthia Chen in 2005, the site was incomplete and the content was out of date. I tried figure out how to update the site, but quickly realized that my limited web skills did not qualify me to do so. Because our site is hosted by Cal Poly, the requirements of the university complicate the ease of updating and improving the site. Instead, I attempted to create alternative access points to the museum. While I have been managing these sites, our faculty advisor Brian Lawler was kind enough to figure out how update the site so that we are at least in the present year. I hope that the work I have done in other sites will eventually transfer over to be housed all at this primary site.

The Shakespeare Press Museum Blog

Using a “blog” proved far easier for than managing the Cal Poly site. The museum’s email account with Google provides includes a Blogger webpage that is customizable and can be used as an online journal. I am using the blog in three ways: as an informational record of student work at the museum, as an online Shakespeare Press Museum, and as a site to make some of my historical research on printing history at the museum available to publicly. The static “pages” that the blog links to provide information similar to what I envision our Cal Poly website will eventually include. The unique properties of blogging and of utilizing the Internet as a source for printing history have enabled me to create a site that utilizes photographs, videos, and text to illustrate letterpress printing and the history of printing. You can visit the blog online at [www.shakespearepress.blogspot.com].

Flickr

The most effective and accessible online site that I created for the museum is our flickr.com page. Our account with Flickr provides us with a place to upload and organize our photographs while participating in a larger community and reaching a far larger audience. The Flickr account has three primary purposes: to present a visual account of current printing work being done by students at the museum, to serve as an online archive of Shakespeare Press Museum collections, and to educate a general audience on the history and technologies of letterpress printing.

The capabilities of Flickr allow for the creation of “sets” where work can be organized, so we have sets on Charles Palmer, our type collection, student work, photographs of the museum and its collections, and more. Through Flickr I established contacts among other printing historians and letterpress printers and joined groups on university letterpress, pinmarks, printing history, and the hand press. By becoming involved in this cyber community, we are expanding and improving access to the museum through alternative sources. Our site has received over 5,100 views so far, and the number of visitors is increasing the more often we upload photographs.

Both the blog and the Flickr account house digital copies of our archives online. They are accessible from any computer. Furthermore, these two sites can be easily used by future student curators, instead of disappearing with the student who they were created by.

The Shakespeare Press Collections and Archives

Newspaper Collection

One of the difficulties caused by a high turnover of student curators from year to year is the resulting “brain drain”—both about the processes of letterpress printing and the history of the museum. For example, in a few rusted map cases below one of the worktables there are over 150 newspaper issues dated from 1795 to 1989. None of the current student curators were aware that the papers existed. There are no donor records or information on the identity of the donor, but it is clear that they were housed in the form they were originally donated, which is to say that they were grouped by category and then wrapped in large plastic sleeves which were taped closed. The plastic was beginning to deteriorate, but it had protected the newspapers from the elements and for transportation relatively well. The quality of the newspapers ranged from being in excellent condition to poor, which included completely taped edges and crumbling pages.

In order to conserve the newspapers and determine what we actually had in the collection I removed the newspapers from the previous storage and rehoused them in archival-grade storage, placed the most fragile papers in mylar, refoldered and organized by location and chronology. Finding aids for manuscript collections have yet to become standard across the library profession, so I researched other newspaper finding aids in the Online Archives of California (OAC) to see how other organizations chose to structure their collections. I used as a reference the *Guide to the California Newspaper Collection, MS-R70* created by Special Collections and Archives at the UC Irvine Libraries. For the structure and format of the finding aids I relied heavily on the suggested template created by the Cal Poly Kennedy Library Special Collections, which provides a well-defined way of ordering manuscript collections.

I also followed the archival best practices that Kennedy Library Special Collections uses. To organize the collection and to make its contents accessible to future researchers I created a finding aid for the collection which provides scope and content and flat file and folder locations for Special Collections staff. In addition guidelines are available for future curators who may need information on how to use and manage the collection. See the appendix for the finding aid.

Charles L. Palmer Collection

The *Charles L. Palmer Collection* is a small collection of photographs, clippings, printed work, and correspondence of Shakespeare Press founder Charles L. Palmer. The majority of the collection is comprised of a scrapbook put together by Palmer or—more likely—his wife Mary. Within the collection there are valuable reproduction proofs and projects completed by Palmer during his time as proprietor of the Shakespeare Press. The scrapbook was found in the far back of one of the map cases in a PG & E envelope. The majority of the printed work was found in various areas in the museum, likely pulled out by past curators to use as a reference. Some of the photographs and small printed works are now available to view online at our flickr.com site [flickr.com/photos/shakespearepress]. See the appendix for the finding aid.

Type Catalog

The over four-hundred fonts of type available at the museum are currently catalogued on two hard-copy spreadsheets, the digital copies of which have since been lost. This severely limits the ways we can search and access the collection, and we most often find fonts to use by literally walking around the museum to the different type cabinets to look at the individual fonts. Although it is of some comfort to us that Charles Palmer also noted that he could spend up to two hours hunting for a font, the lack of organization and access frustrates students who come in

with a certain project in mind. In addition, I believe that the collections are of value to historians of printing, letterpress and digital artists, amateur printers, and other audiences outside of Cal Poly and need to be digitally cataloged.

We began organizing the collection digitally through the program FileMaker Pro, which is a convenient and user-friendly database program. Faculty advisor Brian Lawler and students are volunteering to take proofs of the fonts, which they scan into the program and include with information such as title of the typeface and the point size. This will be of great use in-house for those working in the museum.

It is also our hope, however, of making this database available over the Internet. Current curator Eric Pratt (Business, 2011) specializes in information processing systems, and we are working together to design an online database for the collection of type that will be available to the general public. I believe that such an online database will be of enormous value to both the museum and the larger printing community, which is constantly preoccupied with identifying antique fonts of type and type foundries. By making our typefaces accessible online we will be able to contribute to this field of research. Eric has accepted the challenge of creating an online database as the basis for his senior project, which will be completed over the next two quarters.

The proposed database will include the following sets of information: typeface name and family, point size, type foundry, pin mark, quality of font (if it is usable, in middling condition, or unavailable to print from) and a type specimen of the font. We are using the Rob Roy Kelly American Wood Type Collection available online through the University of Austin, Texas as an example of the potential relevance and structure of the database.⁶⁶ The framework for the database is currently being constructed by Eric, and this framework will enable the cataloging of

⁶⁶ See http://www.utexas.edu/cofa/a_ah/rrk/index.php.

the collection to continue on beyond either Eric's or my tenure at the museum, so that the project can be completed at a future date, but at the same time be accessible online in its current state.

Besides organizing the collection simply for ease of access in using the type, the type database and catalog will provide us with a more complete understanding of the scope of the collection, provide researchers with an alternative source for information, and help me to determine which fonts of type should be removed from regular use due to their rarity.

Shakespeare Press Museum Archives

As an institution embracing over forty years of existence, the Shakespeare Press Museum has acquired an extensive span of office records dating from the 1960s. The majority of this paperwork is found in the "office" of the museum, either in the drawers of the roll-top desk or stacked haphazardly in an antique Cal Poly safe. Although some of these records are not particularly useful to student curators, there are some items of relevance: photographs of the museum, research compiled on the presses and equipment, and paperwork documenting the history of the collections. As one of the parts of the thesis project I organized these archives to be accessible to student curators and future historians of the museum. Unlike the newspaper and manuscript collections, I anticipate that the archival records will be continuously added to throughout the next following decades. In structuring the organization of the archives I tried to create a framework that would allow for students to modify and add to it when they saw fit. A digital copy of the folder list of the archives is available for students to access and to edit. The paperwork is organized first by type, and then chronologically. Therefore, if students wish to see all Shakespeare Press Museum student work they can pull down one box. I decided to store the archives in archival Hollinger boxes to anticipate the presence of the museum archives for several more decades. I believe that improving the access to the archival records primarily by

organizing them will provide students with an important resource on past work, the history of the museum, and the general involvement of the museum in the Cal Poly community.

Shakespeare Press Museum Library

The Shakespeare Press Museum houses an estimated 400 monographs, pamphlets, brochures, and related printing materials. The monograph collection began with the donation of Charles Palmer's collection of books on printing history by his wife Mary in 1964. Since the first donation the collection has grown rapidly, mainly through the generous donations of retired printers and professors. Among the donors to the museum were Otis Chidester; Heidelberg West, C. Herold Gregory, and Steve Mott.

The collection is comprised primarily of twentieth century textbooks and manuals on letterpress printing and is a valuable tool for researchers of printing history as well as a reference for printing techniques and maintenance of presses. In addition there are two monographs printed in the eighteenth century—a subscription elocution book printed in the United States as well as a rare edition of Dante's *Divine Comedy*. Juxtaposed, for example, against a particularly brittle edition of a book of home remedies published in the late 1800s, these monographs can be utilized as teaching tools to explain the early traditions of book printing and the later impact of new technologies such as wood-pulp paper on book publishing. Also of value as a reference in the museum are several type specimen books. These collections, although not representative of a late nineteenth-century printing office, help to complete the museum as a working printing office.

The importance of these texts as research tools inspired me to look at the organization of the library and consider how the collection of books could become more accessible to students working in the museum as well as researchers at distances from the museum. I anticipated

creating a catalog of the pieces based off the Library of Congress classification system, and approached my supervisors in Special Collections at Kennedy Library for advice. However, they offered another solution rather than an amateur cataloging project by putting me in contact with the Kennedy Library cataloging department, who generously offered to help catalog the objects and *input them* into the Kennedy Library cataloging system, known as Polycat. We took time to plan the cataloging project out, determining how to best go about cataloging (I bring over a box of books at a time), how to notate the location of the collection in Polycat, and the physical cataloging process. The collection is being processed in a very similar way to that of Special Collections—instead of placing barcodes on the books themselves we are utilizing book flags. After each box of books is processed I bring them back to the museum, write their assigned Library of Congress (LOC) number in pencil on the inside cover of the book, and organize them on the shelves.

Already, with the collection only partially processed, the catalog is improving the Shakespeare Press library—students are accessing our collections, we are able to find books based on title or content matter, and through the process I am becoming familiar with the rare and extraordinarily useful pieces in the collection. A few of the volumes proved to be too delicate, and have been placed in protective archival boxes to put on the shelf. The large number of brief pamphlets will not be processed as individual pieces but rather as collections arranged chronologically so that the cataloging department will not be overwhelmed with work from the museum. A complication has arisen over where to put all the books—the glass fronted shelves that we have will no longer hold the expanding collection and we are attempting to acquire bookshelves from other areas of campus. I am also compiling a reference sheet for using and accessing the collection, based on LOC organization, which future curators will be able to use. I

hope that by cataloging the collection and making the titles available online we will be utilized by students on campus as well as out-of-town researchers as a source for printing knowledge and history.

The catalogued parts of the collection are available online via Polycat (accessible from the library main home page at lib.calpoly.edu) by limiting the search by “Shakespeare Press Museum” in the author field. There are currently 157 monographs catalogued, which I estimate is approximately one-third of our collection.

Conclusion

The work I completed at the museum is centered on my belief that the collection is a valuable research and educational source for both local and international audiences. Although the work is challenging the rewards of organizing and sharing these collections and research with other people provide meaning and value to this effort. As I worked on this project I eventually came to recognize that this project is no end-all to the work being done to share and protect the museum, but rather participates in a much broader and longer effort by students, faculty, and community members. Furthermore, I slowly came to realize that this fact—that the work of museum curators and volunteers is never “done”—is the way that things should be. I do not *want* the work in the museum to ever truly be completed (although more complete would be nice), because an important part of the experience of working in the museum are the little discoveries that come with opening an old box of donated equipment, or organizing the library, or cataloguing fonts. I hope that visitors to the museum continue to recognize its personal history, the value of the collections it houses, and the vibrant history of printing in California.

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Appendix A:

Guide to the Charles L. Palmer Collection, 1924 - 1964

Guide to the Charles L. Palmer Collection, 1927-1964

Charles L. Palmer Collection, 1927-1964 (bulk 1948-1964)
Processed by Laura Sorvetti, 2010

Shakespeare Press Museum
Graphic Communication Department
1 Grand Avenue
California Polytechnic State University
San Luis Obispo, CA 93407
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Descriptive Summary

Title:

Charles L. Palmer Collection, 1927-1964 (bulk 1948-1964)

Collection Number:

MS 001

Creator:

Palmer, Charles Leicester (1896-1964)

Abstract:

Papers of printer Charles L. Palmer, including printed ephemera produced at the Shakespeare Press, donated to the Shakespeare Press Museum by Charles and Mary Palmer between 1950 and 1964.

Extent:

2 boxes and 1 flat files.

Language:

English

Repository:

Shakespeare Press Museum
Graphic Communication Department
California Polytechnic State University
San Luis Obispo, CA 93407

Administrative Information

Provenance:

Donated by Charles L. and Mary Palmer between 1950 and 1964.

Access:

Collection is open to qualified researchers by appointment only. For more information please contact Shakespeare Press Museum.

Restrictions on Use and Reproduction:

In order to reproduce, publish, broadcast, exhibit, and/or quote from this material, researchers must submit a written request and obtain formal permission from Special Collections, Cal Poly, as the owner of the physical collection.

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Preferred Citation:

[Identification of Item]. Charles L. Palmer Collection, Shakespeare Press Museum, California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo.

Abbreviations Used:

c.: circa

n.d.: no date

l.f.: linear feet

FF: flat file

Indexing Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library's online public access catalog.

Subjects:

Shakespeare Press Museum
Printing--History

Genres and Forms of Material:

Broadsides
Correspondence
Newspaper Clippings
Photographs
Printed Proofs

Biographical Note

Charles Palmer, founder of the Shakespeare Press, Fresno, California, contributed his collection of printing equipment and papers to Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo between 1950 and 1964.

Charles Leicester Palmer was born on November 4, 1896 to Asa and Lucy Palmer. In 1908 the family moved from Indiana to Soquel, California. In 1918 Palmer graduated from the Polytechnic School in San Francisco, where he had acquired the nickname “Shakespeare” due to his professed love of poetry. Between 1916 and 1931 Palmer worked as editor for newspapers in northern California, including San Francisco, Ukiah, and Fresno. In 1934 Palmer quit the newspaper business and joined the public relations staff of San Joaquin Valley Light and Power Corporation, which would soon merge with Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E), as a publicity writer.

As a publicity writer Palmer would travel throughout northern California visiting newspapers and marketing PG&E. In 1938 Palmer acquired his first jobbing press from the *Templeton Advance*. Over the next fifteen years Palmer would collect nineteenth-century presses and type from the many newspapers he visited representing PG&E. Palmer established his collection as “The Shakespeare Press” in 1939 and would use the collection to print small runs of personal work and commissioned work for newspapers, centennial exhibitions, and organizations in California.

In 1950 Palmer agreed to, upon his death, donate the collection to the California Newspaper Publishers Association, who in turn chose California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, as the repository for the collection. Between 1950 and 1964, the year of Palmer’s death, Palmer and the CNPA maintained a steady correspondence with the students at the Printing Department, Cal Poly. On April 19, 1964 Palmer passed away while staying at the San Francisco Press Club.

Scope and Content Note

The Charles L. Palmer Collection is comprised of the personal papers, printed work, and office records of Charles L. Palmer, founder of the Shakespeare Press.

Where possible, the provenance, or original organization, of the papers has been preserved. However, in order to simplify access to the collection for researchers, some materials in specific formats and topics were reorganized and refoldered to more accurately reflect their contents.

The Charles L. Palmer Collection is divided into 2 series:

1. Personal Papers, 1950-1964
2. Shakespeare Press Records, 1927-1964

The Charles L. Palmer Collection is housed in 2 boxes.

Series Description/Folder List

Series 1. Personal Papers, 1950-1964

Contains 2 subseries: A. Newspaper Clipping and Photograph Album and B. Personal Papers

A. Newspaper Clipping and Photograph Album

Contains reproduction copies of newspaper clippings and photographs, arranged chronologically by year, from circa 1964. 16 folders.

Box 1 Folder 1
Pages 1-5

Box 1 Folder 2
Pages 6-10

Box 1 Folder 3
Pages 11-15

Box 1 Folder 4
Pages 16-20

Box 1 Folder 5
Pages 21-25

Box 1 Folder 6
Pages 26-30

Box 1 Folder 7
Pages 31-35

Box 1 Folder 8
Pages 36-40

Box 1 Folder 9
Pages 41-45

Box 1 Folder 10
Pages 46-50

Box 1 Folder 11
Pages 51-55

Box 1 Folder 12

Pages 56-60

Box 1 Folder 13

Pages 61-65

Box 1 Folder 14

Pages 66-70

Box 1 Folder 15

Pages 71-75

Box 1 Folder 16

Pages 76-78

B. Personal Papers

Contains booklets, photocopies, and pamphlets, arranged chronologically by year, from 1950-1964. 3 folders.

Box 2 Folder 1

"Forty-sixth Installation of Officers," Las Palmas Lodge, Fresno, 1950

"Diamond Jubilee Anniversary," Fresno Masonic Lodge, 1953

"Fifty-First Installation of Officers," Las Palmas Lodge, Fresno, 1955

Box 2 Folder 2

Cooking Bold and Fearless: Recipes by Chefs of the West. Menlo Park: Lane Publishing Co., 1957. [excerpts]

Box 2 Folder 3

Charles Palmer Memorial Service pamphlet, 1964

Series 2. Shakespeare Press Records, 1927-1964

Contains 3 subseries: A. Printed at the Shakespeare Press, B. Shakespeare Press Correspondence, C. From other Presses

A. Printed at the Shakespeare Press

Contains printed ephemera and monographs, arranged chronologically by year, from 1939-1964. 5 folders.

Box 2 Folder 4

Palmer printed ephemera for personal use, 1939-1959, undated

Box 2 Folder 5

Shakespeare Press commissioned work, 1946-1959, undated

FF 3 Folder 1

Shakespeare Press commissioned and personal work, 1948-1964, undated

Box 2 Folder 6

Shakespeare Press Specimen Book of Old Fashioned Type, Fresno: Shakespeare Press, 1947.
[includes make-ready, and typed transcript]

Box 2 Folder 7

Pastime Cook Book and Kitchen Companion. Fresno: Shakespeare Press, 1951 [1964].

B. Shakespeare Press Correspondence

Contains correspondence, from 1951-1952. 1 folder.

Box 2 Folder 8

Correspondence regarding printing, 1951-1952

C. From Other Presses

Contains printed ephemera and correspondence, arranged chronologically, from 1927-1961. 2 folders.

Box 2 Folder 9

Harbison & Harbison, Halcyon Press, Oceano, correspondence, 1927, 1937

Box 2 Folder 10

Printed Ephemera not by Palmer, 1954-1961

Appendix B:

Guide to the Shakespeare Press Museum Newspaper Collection, 1795 - 1989

Guide to the Shakespeare Press Museum Newspaper Collection, 1795-1989

Shakespeare Press Museum Newspaper Collection, 1795-1989 (bulk 1870-1921)
Processed by Laura Sorvetti, 2010

Shakespeare Press Museum
Graphic Communications Department
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Descriptive Summary

Title:

Shakespeare Press Museum Newspaper Collection, 1795-1989 (bulk 1870-1921)

Collection Number:

MS 003

Creator:

Various

Abstract:

Newspapers, primarily relating to California history, donated by various contributors between 1960 and 2000.

Extent:

3 flatfiles

Language:

English

Repository:

Shakespeare Press Museum
Graphic Communication Department
California Polytechnic State University
San Luis Obispo, CA 93407

Administrative Information

Provenance:

Donated by various donors between 1960 and 2000.

Access:

Collection is open to qualified researchers by appointment only. For more information please contact Shakespeare Press Museum.

Restrictions on Use and Reproduction:

In order to reproduce, publish, broadcast, exhibit, and/or quote from this material, researchers must submit a written request and obtain formal permission from Shakespeare Press Museum, Cal Poly, as the owner of the physical collection.

Photocopying of material is permitted at staff discretion and provided on a fee basis. Photocopies are not to be used for any purpose other than for private study, scholarship, or research. Special Collections staff reserves the right to limit photocopying and deny access or reproduction in cases when, in the opinion of staff, the original materials would be harmed.

Preferred Citation:

[Identification of Item]. Shakespeare Press Museum Newspaper Collection, 1795-1989, Shakespeare Press Museum, California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo.

Abbreviations Used:

c.: circa

n.d.: no date

n.p.: no publisher

l.f.: linear feet

FF: flat file

Indexing Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library's online public access catalog.

Subjects:

California--History--1850-1950.

California--History--18th century--Sources.

Newspapers.

Newspapers--History--19th century.

San Francisco Earthquake and Fire, Calif., 1906--Sources.

Genres and Forms of Material:

Newspapers

Periodicals

Related Collections:

Charles L. Palmer Collection, 1927-1964

Scope and Content Note

The Shakespeare Press Newspaper Collection contains historical newspapers from California and other states recounting historical events.

Where possible, the provenance, or original organization, of the papers has been preserved. However, in order to simplify access to the collection for researchers, some materials in specific formats and topics were reorganized and refoldered to more accurately reflect their contents.

The Shakespeare Press Newspaper Collection is divided into 4 series:

Series 1. Early American Newspapers, 1795-1805

Series 2. California Newspapers, 1851-1989

Series 3. Presidential Deaths Newspapers, 1865-1963

Series 4. *The Printer*, 1975-1976

The Shakespeare Press Newspaper Collection is housed in 3 flat files, with Series 2. California Newspapers containing the most extensive and unique portions of the collection because of the series scope and chronology.

Series 1. Early American Newspapers, 1795-1805

Contains 1 subseries: Early American Newspapers.

A. Early American Newspapers, 1795-1805

Contains newspapers, arranged alphabetically by title, from 1795-1805. 1 folder.

FF 1 Folder 1

The Daily Advertiser, 1795 September 16

The Connecticut Courant, 1805 December

Washington Federalist, 1803 January 17

Series 2. California Newspapers, 1851-1989

Contains 4 subseries: A. San Francisco Newspapers, B. Northern California Newspapers, C. Southern California Newspapers, D. San Francisco Earthquake, 1906.

A. San Francisco Newspapers

Contains newspapers, arranged alphabetically by title, from 1851-1909. 4 folders.

FF 1 Folder 2

San Francisco Chronicle

1906

April 1 (partial)

April 8 (partial)

Framed

Daily Alta California 1857 March 2

FF 1 Folder 3

San Francisco Daily Bulletin

1896

October 15 (partial)

1898

January 22 (partial)

1901

September 8 (partial)

1902

April 13 (partial)

1904

May 26 (partial)

December 24 (partial)

1906

June 20

June 22 (partial)

1909

September

San Francisco Daily Bulletin Supplement

1890 August 23

1891 December 26

FF 1 Folder 4

San Francisco Daily Evening Bulletin

1874

June 4

August 3

October 15

October 17

December 17

December 19

1875

January 21

January 22

January 29

February 8

March 3

August 2 – 7

August 9 – 14

August 16 – 17

August 20 – 21

August 24 – 26

September 1

September 7 – 11

September 13 – 18

September 20 – 22

September 24

September 30

1885 March 25 – 27

1886

March 5

July 17

November 1

February 6

February 13

1887 May 13

1891 August 25

FF 1 Folder 5

San Francisco Daily Examiner,

1874 July 14

1887 March 4
Evening Picayune
1851 February 20
Morning Bulletin
1870
September 8
December 15
Public Balance 1851 January 13

B. Northern California Newspapers

Contains newspapers, arranged alphabetically by title, from 1859-1989. 3 folders.

FF 2 Folder 1

Columbia Gazette, 1966

September

November

December

Electronic Times 1989

Fresno Republican 1916 March 19

Mariposa Gazette 1865 April 22

Shasta Courier 1859 December 24

FF 2 Folder 2

Ukiah Times-Journal

1920

March 24

March 31

April 7

April 14

April 21

April 28

May 5

May 12

May 19

May 26

June 2

June 9

June 16

June 23

June 30

July 7

July 14

July 21

July 28

August 11

August 18

August 25

FF 2 Folder 3

Ukiah Times-Journal

1920

September 1

September 8

September 15

September 22

September 29
October 6
October 13
October 20
October 27
November 3
November 10
November 17
November 24
December 1
December 8
December 15
December 22

1921

January 5

C. Southern California Newspapers

Contains newspapers, arranged alphabetically by title, from 1887-1979. 6 folders.

FF 2 Folder 4

Arroyo Grande Valley Herald Recorder 1962 July 13

Atascadero News, 1963 reprint of January 22, 1916

Five Cities Times-Press-Recorder 1979 January 24

FF 2 Folder 5

Julian Sentinel

1887

December 9

December 23

1888

January 20

January 27

February 17

August 17

September 21

September 28

October 5

October 12

October 19

October 26

November 2

November 16

November 23
November 30
December 14
December 21

FF 2 Folder 6
Julian Sentinel
1889

January 4
January 11
January 18
February 8
February 22
March 1
July 12
July 19
July 26
August 9
August 16
August 23
September 6
September 13
September 20
September 27
October 4
October 11
October 25
November 8
November 15
November 22
December 13

FF 2 Folder 7
Julian Sentinel
1890

May 30
June 6
June 13
June 20
June 27
July 11
July 18
July 25
August 1
August 8
August 22

August 29
September 19
September 26
October 3
October 10
October 18
November 7
November 14
November 21
November 28
December 5
December 12
December 19
December 26

FF 2 Folder 8
Julian Sentinel
1891

January 2
January 9
January 16
January 23
January 30
February 6
February 13
February 20
February 27
March 6
March 13
March 20
March 29
April 16
April 23
April 30

FF 2 Folder 9
Los Angeles Times, 1918 November 11

Paso Robles Independent 1894 February 24

San Luis Obispo County Telegram-Tribune
1956

May 8
May 9
May 10
May 11

May 14
May 15
May 16
May 17
May 18
1969
August 7 Centennial Edition

San Miguel Banner 1959 July 16

D. San Francisco Earthquake Newspapers, 1906

Contains newspapers, arranged alphabetically by title, from 1906. 1 folder.

FF 3 Folder 1
San Francisco Chronicle
1906
April 18
June 20
Stockton Daily Independent
1906 April 22

Unidentified San Francisco newspaper
1906 April 20 (partial)

Series 3. Presidential Deaths Newspapers, 1865-1963

Contains 5 subseries: A. Abraham Lincoln Assassination, B. James A. Garfield Death, C. William McKinley Assassination, D. Franklin Delano Roosevelt Death, E. John F. Kennedy Assassination.

A. Abraham Lincoln Assassination

Contains newspapers, arranged alphabetically by title, from 1865. 1 folder.

FF 3 Folder 2
New York Herald 15 April 1865

B. James A. Garfield Death

Contains newspapers, arranged alphabetically by title, from 1881. 1 folder.

FF 3 Folder 2
Morning Californian 25 September 1881

C. William McKinley Assassination

Contains newspapers, arranged alphabetically by title, from 1901. 1 folder.

FF 3 Folder 2

San Francisco Examiner 7 September 1901

D. Franklin Delano Roosevelt Death

Contains newspapers, arranged alphabetically by title, from 1945. 1 folder.

FF 3 Folder 2

Bakersfield Californian 12 April 1945

E. John F. Kennedy Assassination

Contains newspapers, arranged alphabetically by title, from 1963. 1 folder.

FF 3 Folder 3

Dallas Times Herald 22 November 1963

Niagara Falls Gazette 8 December 1963

San Luis Obispo Telegram Tribune 22 November 1963

Welt am Sonntag 24 November 1963

Series 4. *The Printer*, 1975-1976

Contains 1 subseries: A. *The Printer*

A. *The Printer*

Contains newspapers, arranged chronologically by date, from 1975-1976. 1 folder.

FF 3 Folder 4

The Printer

1975

January
February
March
April
May
June
July
August
September
October
November
December

1976

March
April/May