

The WAYZGOOSE GAZETTE

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE INTERNATIONAL PRINTING MUSEUM • BUENA PARK, CALIFORNIA

VOLUME 5, NUMBER 4

WINTER, 1995

Gold Is Discovered Again in California's Historic Motherlode As Museum Acquires A Rare Ruggles Press

The mines in California's famous motherlode country which yielded their precious wealth have long since been abandoned. But with persistence and careful digging, treasures are still to be found. For printing historians, however, precious metal means lead or cast iron. After years of searching and prodding, the Printing Museum in Buena Park has just added another jewel to the already outstanding E.A. Lindner Collection of Antique Printing Machinery.

The press is known as the Ruggles Card and Billhead Press, circa 1855. Invented by Stephen Ruggles of Boston in 1851, it represents the first successful small jobbing press to be invented and sold to printers with a vertical bed and platen. The press also represents the transition from the slow hand presses in use since Gutenberg's day, and the fast and popular jobbing presses known as Gordon Platen Presses. It was Ruggles' press that George Gordon credits for his own invention of the standard platen press only a few years later. Platen presses of Gordon's type were in use from 1855 until the 1970's, the most common of which are known as C & P's.

With the use of a treadle and a heavy flywheel, the Ruggles Press maintains a speed of over 1,000 impressions per hour compared to 150 on the hand presses; it efficiently prints small cards and business letterheads, which were tedious on the large and cumbersome hand presses. The construction of the press is very peculiar, having a smooth cylinder which rotates clockwise in a circle as the flywheel turns. The cylinder has one flat surface where the

chase and type is located. Ink rollers travel completely around the cylinder, picking up ink on the smooth surface, then travel over the type. At the right moment in the cycle, the cylinder rotates into position and impresses the type onto the paper, after which it continues rotating to repeat the process.

Three years ago, Alan Dietch, a dealer in rare books and antique printing equipment in Northern



Cator Mark Barbour successfully maneuvers Ruggles Press out of Dan Barnett's basement in Jackson, CA, and prepares to wench the press onto the trailer.

California as well as a Friend of Printing Museum, mentioned in passing the existence of a rare Ruggles Press in Jackson, CA. As a curator, whenever I talk with Alan, I am careful to listen to the details and hints he provides in the conversation about the locations of antique printing machinery. His decades in the trade and numerous contacts make him a very valuable resource in the hunt for new treasures.

That day we were discussing the only known surviving Ruggles presses, one at the Smithsonian and another Alan had found and sold to a private individual recently. "Collector's covetousness" sprang up within me as we discussed these other two

presses, when Alan mentioned he knew of a third one, owned by a newspaper publisher in Jackson.

Without a name or any other solid lead, the hunt began. The following week I ventured down historic Highway 49 outside of Sacramento, winding my way through the California Goldrush and into the small town of Jackson. The *Amador Ledger Dispatch* in Jackson provided few clues as to the existence of the press, but they did indicate the name of the former publisher, Dan Barnett, along with the names of a couple of people in the town familiar with the history of the two newspapers.

After a few hours of persistent attempts, I managed to talk with Dan Barnett and meet him at his home. Dan Barnett was the publisher of the *Dispatch* from 1965 until 1980, when he sold the paper to a subsidiary of the *Sacramento Bee*. Not sold to the *Bee* was the old Ruggles Printing Press, which had been with the paper since 1863. Dan was hoping to remodel his home in the hills outside of Jackson and include the press in the entry way.

My anticipation to see this rare treasure began to peak when he finally offered to show me the press in his basement. Having seen the other two Ruggles Presses, I was impressed with the excellent condition of this third one. It appeared to be complete, without cracks or welds in the cast iron, and in near working condition. And then to know of its colorful history with one Californian newspaper since the 1860's, I felt this press had to become a part of the museum collection.

As a collector, you begin early in a conversation to explore possible avenues and opportunities that will lead to the acquisition of the desired piece—subtle inquiries at first leading finally to open pleading! Hopefully, you receive a definite answer from the party before that last stage. It became obvious that Dan wasn't ready to let go of the press yet, though he indicated that there was a possibility in the future.

With that, Dan remained on my Most Wanted List, and every visit to Northern California over the next two years included a pass through Jackson and the opportunity to knock on his door. If anything, I figure time is on my side.

After another call this last August to inquire about the status of the press, I had the impression Dan was ready to deal. Within the week I was back up in Jackson with my truck and trailer by route of Coulterville on the south side of the Motherlode where I picked up another donation of equipment.

From Coulterville I wound my way up to Jackson, my only stop being a curious historical landmark indicating something about "Mark Twain's Cabin

on Jack Ass Hill." How can you pass up that kind of history? With a growing smile on my face, I decided to stop and see what Twain's relationship to "Jack-ass Hill" was. I was directed up a long, and small, dirt road for a few miles until I came upon a dilapidated, one-room shack. The sign next to it remarked that this decrepit structure was built in 1920 on the sight of the original cabin, a place where Mark Twain stayed while working on his famous story, "*The Jumping Frogs of Calaveras County*." As to the name of hill, this was the route of the jackass caravans that hauled supplies into the motherlode. Personally, I think it's name comes from the thousands of tourists such as myself who venture off the main roads to ponder such historical wonders!

Dan and I came close to an agreement during that visit, but despite the presence of my truck he was not ready to part with the Ruggles. Only a temporary setback, since I knew I was going to be up in the area in October for a printing trade show in Sacramento. Two weeks prior to the trade show I called him again and he gave in—not for a long-term loan as we first talked about, but rather for a donation of the press!

When I showed up to pick up the press, Dan was out of town leaving only his step-daughter to open the door for me. Fortunately, his basement where the press was located was also a woodworking shop which allowed me to cut and build a skid for the press and then create a ramp for the stairs that led to my trailer. His step-daughter just watched in wonder as I lifted the press with my tools, attached the skid to the bottom and then rolled it to the ramp.

I slowly wrenched the press through a narrow doorway and up the flight of steps onto the trailer, all the while giving her the history of the Ruggles Press and its new home at the Printing Museum. As the sun set, her boyfriend with reasonable size arms showed up, in time to watch me tie the press down. He was thanked for his timely assistance!

The Ruggles Press is now at the Museum in Buena Park, awaiting restoration and repair. Though mostly complete, the press is missing its treadle and the wooden box it stands on. The press will be unveiled for the public at the Museum's annual open house during Int'l Printing Week on Saturday, Jan. 20th.

This year's celebration will include a Monte Carlo Casino Night, food and entertainment. For tickets or more information on this event, please call the Museum at 714/ 523-2070.

Come and enjoy a view of our most recent treasure, the rare Ruggles Printing Press—a press that tells the colorful history of the *Amador Dispatch*, California's oldest surviving newspaper.

With the addition of our new Science Tour in 1996, the Printing Museum will be offering four separate educational tours to the public. Each of the tours is designed to use the collections as a springboard for various subjects, from great inventions and inventors to American and world history, from how things work to how our Constitution was created. In short, we attempt to make history come to life.

As tour guides for the hundreds of students that visit the Museum each week to participate in these tours, we are refreshed when occasionally a letter of appreciation comes back. Here are some of the comments by recent visitors to the Museum. Hopefully by reading these you will gain a clearer understanding of the educational role the Printing Museum is playing in Southern California, and also take pride for your own involvement in this facility. And if you haven't experienced each of our tours (Pages of Invention: The Communications Tour, Pages of Adventure: The Reading Tour, Pages of Freedom: The Constitution Tour, and Pages of Discovery: Franklin's Science Tour), stop by the Museum the next time you are in the area. It will inspire you in much the same way as us to see the enthusiastic expression on the faces of the students.

Dear Curators,

Our 6th grade class thoroughly enjoyed their visit to your wonderful museum. Our docent gave an excellent, intelligent and humorous presentation. Ben Franklin made history come alive and inspired my students to use their own creativity. —Patricia Arkosy, 6th grade teacher

(General Tour, Constitution Tour) The Printing Museum was great. I never knew how a newspaper or book was made until I went to the Printing Museum...It was dumb of the King to tax more money. I think he should give what he has cause kings have a lot of money.—Helen Lee, student

Your Museum is really neat. I learned a lot just in two hours.—Samantha Cashio, student

(Constitution Tour) It was fun learning about Congress and printing. I enjoyed going into the Constitutional Convention and making decisions...Now I think history is my favorite subject. You made it fun and interesting!—Chris Cruz, student

(General Tour) Thank you for that inspiring tour and skit. How better to learn history than to act it out? I'm really glad that you set up this museum for the education of today's youth...Thanks for the experience.—Jamie Burke, student

(Constitution Tour, Reading Tour) This was one of the best field trips I ever have gone on. The best part for me was the play at the Constitutional Convention. I liked learning how paper was made in Egypt and how you bind books. Thanks for a wonderful day.—Patrick Monahan, student

(General Tour, Constitution Tour) You have a unique way of making us understand! I learned about the Bill of Rights. When I came out I knew more than what I knew before I went in!—Fernando Vegg, student

(Reading Tour) The time machine was cool!—Edward Fernandez, student

(Constitution Tour) I really loved the discussion of the Constitution. I really learned lots of things.—Ivan Carlos, student

It was RAD!—Paul Miller, student (of course!)

(Constitution Tour, General Tour) I really enjoyed pretending to be different colonists debating about the Constitution. I learned many things, such as the fact that the State of Rhode Island was the last state out of thirteen to join the Union. It was also interesting to be able to see the old printing machines. I also like learning about how the invention of printing changed our country's development. It was a great learning experience.—Jessica Hurley, student

Annual Open House Celebration Combined with Printing Week Casino Night on Saturday, January 20th

Plan on spending an entertaining evening at the Printing Museum's annual open house celebration on Saturday, January 20th. The evening's festivities begin at 6 pm. and will include special tours and demonstrations throughout the Museum's galleries as well as the opportunity to meet Ernie Lindner, the

collector, who will have recently returned from an expedition to the South Pole.

The evening will be combined with a Monte Carlo-style Casino Night to help raise funds for the International Printing Museum Foundation. Every guest will receive \$100 in casino chips to enjoy at the

game tables. At the end of the evening, any remaining chips can be converted into raffle tickets for the opportunity at \$1,000 in prizes.

The curator, Mark Barbour, will unveil the Museum's most recent acquisition, the rare 1855 Ruggles Press, recently acquired from Jackson, CA, in the heart of the California Gold Rush. One of only three such presses to have survived, the Ruggles remained with the publishers of the same newspaper since it was bought new. The curator will be relating the history of the press and the Southern sympathetic newspaper it served in the Gold Rush during

the Civil War.

Entertainment for the evening will be provided by the Leon Guide Band, a regular favorite at the Museum. Plenty of refreshments, hors d'oeuvres and desserts will be on hand for guests.

Tickets are \$25 each, and because the event is being sponsored by the Printing Industries of Southern California (PIASC), all proceeds will benefit the Printing Museum Foundation. For tickets or more information, please call the Museum at (714) 523-2070 or send your checks to 8469 Kass Drive, Buena Park, CA 90621.

Become a Friend of the Museum and Show Your Support

One of the tangible ways to express your support of the Printing Museum and its efforts at the preservation and presentation of history is to become a member of the Friends of the Printing Museum. Membership begins at \$25/year and you receive the Museum's newsletter, *The Wayzgoose Gazette*, beautifully printed keepsakes, 10% discount on purchases at the Museum Gift Shop, and passes to visit the Museum. Contributions beyond the basic membership of \$25 are tax deductible as charitable contributions (to the extent allowed by law).

As a private, non-profit museum, the International Printing Museum depends on the support of patrons, benefactors and visitors. Their support makes possible the many tours and educational programs now offered at the Museum, tours ranging from the history of communication and the printed word to reenactments of the Constitutional Convention with Ben Franklin and James Madison.

Since its inception in 1988, the International Printing Museum has attracted over 40,000 visitors, from 1st grade up to senior citizens, most of whom have nothing to do with printing other than their books in school or their morning newspaper. Though the museum was established to house and display the Ernest A. Lindner Collection of Antique Printing Machinery, it has emerged as a living, working experience of the evolution of mankind's single most important invention—the printed word.

One of only four American museums with significant collections of antique printing machinery, the International Printing Museum has been recognized by a curator at the Smithsonian Institution as being the largest and most comprehensive exhibit in the world. This has been accomplished through a principle of working machinery and displays which captivate the interest of visitors, allowing to be shared the stories each machine has to tell about

American and world history, Freedom of the Press, the Constitution, literacy, great inventions and their inventors.

Rather than being just another display of a particular industry's technology, the Printing Museum has used the collection as a creative springboard for the subjects of history and science. After her school's visit, one teacher remarked that "the students swallowed the pill of education without realizing it, having enjoyed their tour and visit so much."

As a Friend of the Printing Museum, your ongoing annual support helps us continue to develop the Museum's programs, as well as provide the funds necessary to acquire new pieces for the collection. Even if you are not in the area to readily enjoy the Museum's exhibits and programs, your support helps to ensure the preservation of the world's largest printing museum. If you haven't become a Friend already, will you consider doing so? And if you are a Friend, is there someone you know who might also find interest in this organization? If a membership application is not enclosed with this issue, please call the Museum at (714) 523-2070 for more information.

THE WAYZGOOSE GAZETTE

is issued quarterly for the Friends of the International Printing Museum, founded by David Jacobson and which features the Ernest A. Lindner Collection of Antique Printing Machinery.

Membership into the Friends is \$25 annually and goes to support the programs of the Museum.

The term "wayzgoose" refers to a traditional annual printers celebration, dating back to the 17th century.

8469 Kass Drive, Buena Park, CA 90621
(714) 523-2070

Mark Barbour, curator and editor

Copyright 1995—The International Printing Museum
