# Printing in America

## —*and American Type Founders*

THOMAS ROY JONES

*"Were American Newcomen to do naught else, our work is well done if we succeed in sharing with America a strengthened inspiration to continue the struggle towards a nobler Civilization— through wider knowledge and understanding of the hopes, ambitions, and deeds of leaders in the past who have upheld Civilization's material progress. As we look backward, let us look forward."*

—CHARLES PENROSE
*Senior Vice-President for North America*
*The Newcomen Society of England*

*This statement, crystallizing a broad purpose of the Society, was first read at the Newcomen Meeting at New York World's Fair on August 5, 1939, when American Newcomen were guests of The British Government*

*"Actorum Memores simul affectamus Agenda"*

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# PRINTING IN AMERICA

*—and American Type Founders*

AMERICAN NEWCOMEN, *through the years, has honored numerous American Industries and the memories of men whose vision, initiative, experience, courage, fortitude, driving force, and unwavering Faith have had lasting effect upon the development of America's natural resources, America's business enterprises, and America's amazing progress. Such a Newcomen manuscript is this dealing with an Art and an Industry fundamental both to intellectual and economic advancement.*

"The very remote ancestor of American Type Founders was established in 1735 at Germantown in the then Province of Pennsylvania, which, in turn, had been founded in 1682 by William Penn. One Christopher Sauer, who had packed his tools and left his native Germany to seek fresh and broader opportunities in the new world, began a type foundry there at Germantown. He prospered."

—Thomas Roy Jones

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## —and American Type Founders

*THOMAS ROY JONES*

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PRESIDENT
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ELIZABETH
NEW JERSEY

THE NEWCOMEN SOCIETY OF ENGLAND

AMERICAN BRANCH NEW YORK

1948

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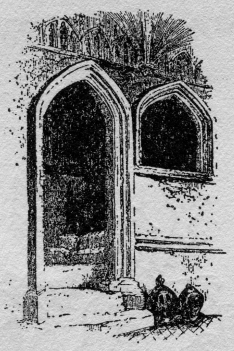
*First Printing: November 1948*
*Second Printing: November 1948*



*This Newcomen Address, dealing with the beginnings, growth, and development of an American Industry vital to America's intellectual and economic advance, was delivered at a National Newcomen Dinner of The Newcomen Society of England, in Ballroom of The Pierre, at New York, N.Y., U.S.A., at which Mr. Jones was guest of honor. The dinner was held on November 18, 1948*

SET UP, PRINTED AND BOUND IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA FOR THE NEWCOMEN PUBLICATIONS IN NORTH AMERICA BY PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS

"The Type Foundry that Benjamin Franklin started in 1786 has an interesting history of its own. Franklin returned to America in that year after brilliant diplomatic successes in Paris. His simple American charm had won the hearts of the French and he was considered, with the possible exception of George Washington, the outstanding American of his day; in fact, one of the few known outside of the limits of his own country. Scientists read his studies in electricity, philosophers admired his native American honesty, and considered him the embodiment of the 'natural man'; and writers were influenced by his simplicity of style. He was a man of many parts, but he was, as he said himself, essentially *a printer*. On his return from Paris where he had purchased complete type making equipment, he established the Franklin Foundry which he operated until his death."

—Thomas Roy Jones

# *Biographical Sketch of The Author*

*So basic is* PRINTING *as an agency promoting civilization that not one can conjecture what Mankind's lot would have been nor would be without type and the printed page! From the 15th Century, or earlier, Printing has pervaded every exercise of men's intellect: has recorded their history, their emotions, their triumphs, their disasters; has been the outstanding vehicle for their enlightenment; has told them of life and living; has explained to them their surroundings; has brought them to their knees, pointing a way towards inspiration. The printed word can uplift; can take the reader out of himself and into new and broader vistas; can stimulate imagination; can unlock doors to golden treasures of mind and soul. Beauty can reside in the printed word: an enduring beauty, proof against time and the ages! Language and shadows of meaning, color and emphasis, feeling and emotion—all these are portrayed. Printing is one of Man's greatest weapons: for good or evil, for success or failure, for victory or defeat. Flying upon winged winds of the mind, the printed word shapes the world's human destinies.*

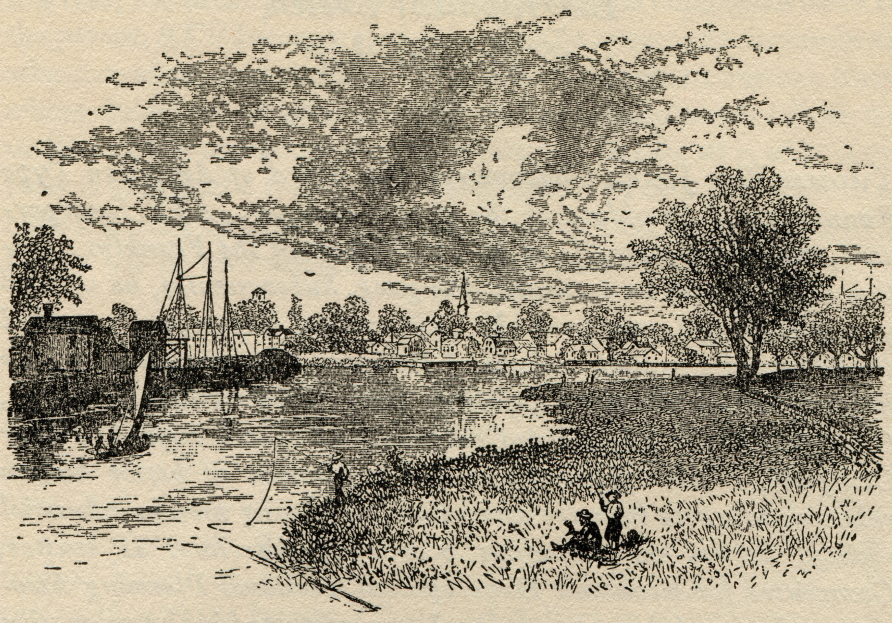
*In its history of over 200 years, American Type Founders has influenced human development through invention of faster printing means; has influenced art through type craftsmanship and printed portrayal; and has made numerous contributions to industry and to society. The company's lineage includes Benjamin Franklin, who founded a predecessor type foundry in Philadelphia in 1786. Starting as a poor boy, Benjamin Franklin's energy, scientific curiosity, contributions to letters and diplomacy made him an historic figure. Although deceased in 1790, his homely humanity and understanding create an affectionate memory, and a heritage.*

*While the years have brought constant mechanical improvements to American Type Founders, the company has tried ever in carrying on its rich tradition to instrument the craftsmanship, enterprise and performance to society of many of its founders and their successors. And the men who guide its destiny have carried on the belief of the dignity of the human being.*

# *Biographical Sketch of The Author*

THOMAS ROY JONES, *Chairman of the Board of American Type Founders and President of the parent company, ATF Incorporated, started business life in his counterpart of the Franklin tradition as a rod man on a construction gang. Subsequently, he secured an engineering degree from the University of Kansas, and attended the Harvard Graduate School of Business Administration. While holding varied executive capacities with Moline Plow Company, Cincinnati Milling Machine Company, and Harris-Seybold Potter Company, he has pioneered in the promotion of better human relations to create friendly understanding among men in industrial society. Serves on numerous boards of directors. Is trustee, Committee for Economic Development, National Planning Association, Junior Achievement, Inc. Long interested in the promotion of business management as a profession. Member, National Management Council and Vice-Chairman, Eighth International Management Congress, Stockholm, Sweden; Director, American Management Association. Has ever been ready to serve national and civic causes through work on War Agency boards and through local hospital and service organizations. As first President of New Jersey State Safety Council, is working toward greater protection for its citizens. Industrialist, good citizen, student of material history, Mr. Jones is a Vice-Chairman of the New Jersey Committee, in The Newcomen Society of England.*

HIS MARK



*My fellow members of Newcomen:*

We, in American Newcomen, are intrigued by recital of those historical events and trends which have played their parts in forming American life and developing American business. As a Society, and during more than a quarter century, we have devoted attention to many phases. Tonight, we are to consider the beginnings and growth of an industry and an industrial organization which can boast unique relationship to America's progress.

With such brief preamble, *Mr. Chairman*, we proceed to an informal historical review:

The History of American Type Founders, Incorporated is in reality *the history of printing* in the United States. It is a company rich in tradition, and its growth from primitive beginnings back in the colonial period of this country is a testament to the ingenuity and inventive genius of the American mind. The organization, which was formed back in 1892 through the merger of 25 companies and firms manufacturing and selling over 85 percent of the

entire output of type in the United States, was more than a combination of type foundries. It was a combination of minds, and it preserved in one company the hopes and dreams of those early Americans who began their struggling foundries along our Eastern Seaboard. American Type Founders has a distinguished lineage, and it is ever conscious of the part the past plays in its future.

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The very remote ancestor of the present company was established in 1735 at Germantown in Pennsylvania. One Christopher Sauer, who had packed his tools and left his native Germany to seek fresh opportunities in the new world, began a type foundry there. He was a good workman and prospered, so much so that in 1739 he began a newspaper which lasted until his retirement. He made German type and executed in German the first quarto Bible published in this country. Also many other German books, printed with meticulous care, found their way from his busy press into the homes of his neighbors. Eventually, Sauer's Foundry was absorbed by the Philadelphia concern of Binney & Ronaldson, actually the first successful foundry to take root in America.

Binney & Ronaldson was a partnership. It was the outgrowth of a friendship between two very canny Scotsmen who possessed those qualities so essential to the success of any business—"know-how" and capital. They complemented each other perfectly for Binney had the skill and Ronaldson possessed the means. As a matter of fact, James Ronaldson had been in the bakery business, but fortunately for the type industry his shop burned down, and before he could get started again he had met Archibald Binney, fresh off the boat from Edinburgh. Binney had his tools and his knowledge, plus complete confidence in himself, ambition, and a tongue whose persuasiveness was not dulled by its Highland burr. He pointed out that a Type Foundry would probably be successful in Philadelphia as most of the printing was being done abroad. James Ronaldson agreed. In 1794 "on the corner of Cedar Street, atwixt Ninth and Tenth Streets" a sign was hung on a frame house bearing the legend "*Binney and Ronaldson, Type Founders.*" For this house, the partners agreed to pay $17.33 a month rent.

From the beginning the success of the company was assured. Binney knew his business, and Ronaldson for his part, was a capable administrator and a born salesman. Quickly, they bought the tools and equipment of Sauer's Foundry in Germantown from one of his descendants and in 1796 absorbed the New York Foundry of Adam Mappa. Mappa, incidentally, had started his firm in 1787. He cast Dutch and German faces as his trade demanded, but had never really made a go of things. His financial situation became more and more precarious and when he received the offer from the Philadelphia firm he was happy to "sell both" his equipment and his company's good will.

In 1800 the partners had their rent increased to $40 a month. They built at this time another house on the same lot at a cost of $2,500 plus a yearly ground rent of $72. Entries in the company's books under "House Expenses and Furniture" indicate that either one or both of them lived on the premises. Another interesting item in the books was the valuation of Binney's tools at $888.88 and it is presumed that Ronaldson put up a like amount of cash to start the firm going.

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The early books of the company are interesting. For instance, from June 1798 to August 1799 $2011.57 was paid out in wages. Names of famous Americans dot the pages of the ledgers. The name of William Cobbett, the noted English Radical, appears as owing $12.08. Cobbett paid up $12.06¼ cents—at that time the cent was not the smallest denomination of our coins—and evidently felt that he had done enough. This cavalier disregard of the cent and three-quarters was not shared by those shrewd Scotsmen, Binney and Ronaldson. For several years the shortage of the cent and three-quarters was duly carried forward to profit and loss. Whether Cobbett ever paid up or not, research fails to discover. However, judging from other entries in the books, it is safe to assume that he received a bill for it.

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*The Franklin Foundry*

The Type Foundry that Benjamin Franklin started in 1786 has an interesting history of its own. Franklin returned to America

in that year after brilliant diplomatic successes in Paris. His simple American charm had won the hearts of the French and he was considered, with the possible exception of George Washington, the outstanding American of his day; in fact, one of the few known outside of the limits of his own country. Scientists read his studies in electricity, philosophers admired his native American honesty, and considered him the embodiment of the "natural man"; and writers were influenced by his simplicity of style. He was a man of many parts, but he was, as he said himself, essentially *a printer*. On his return from Paris where he had purchased complete type making equipment, he established the Franklin Foundry which he operated until his death.

The business was inherited by his grandson, Benjamin Franklin Bache. Young Bache lacked the old man's drive, and the Franklin Foundry fell on hard times. In 1806, its equipment came into possession of a Mr. Duane—a distant relative of its founder—and he, evidently had no interest in operating the business. He was, however, impressed with the zeal with which Binney and Ronaldson were carrying on the tradition of American printing, and he offered them the machinery that his distinguished kinsman had brought back from France twenty years before.

Ronaldson accepted with enthusiasm. Actually he was so afraid that Mr. Duane would change his mind that he hurriedly secured a wheelbarrow and a wagon and excitedly transported the entire equipment to his own place of business on one of the hottest days of a Philadelphia summer. Thus the firm of Binney and Ronaldson became the heirs of the Franklin Foundry and it carried on in its high tradition of printing. Benjamin Franklin could have asked for no worthier successors.

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Franklin's equipment was inherited by American Type Founders, Incorporated, when it was formed in 1892. For many years, it was a prize possession of the company. Finally, to assure its safe keeping and to afford the public a greater opportunity to see it, it went with the American Type Founders famous *library of printing art* to Columbia University, where it may now be seen at that institution's library.

In 1809 the company's first specimen books appeared and the incomplete copies existent today show a variety of arts and printing types from plate to Pica. These first books were followed in 1812 and 1813 by others and, in 1815, the year of Archibald Binney's retirement, elaborate specimen books were issued to the customers.

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James Ronaldson continued under his name until 1823 when he was succeeded by his son, Richard. From this time on the story of American Type Founders, Incorporated in the cities of Philadelphia and Boston illustrates how much a part of the printing industry the company is. In 1820 it was that a certain Lawrence Johnson, a printer who had learned his trade in England, established a Stereotype Foundry in Philadelphia. There he met George F. Smith, and they eventually formed a partnership to buy the Foundry of Richard Ronaldson. They extended their operations and prospered. In 1843, George Smith retired and Johnson, growing old himself, injected new blood into the firm by admitting into the partnership Thomas McKellar, John F. Smith, Richard Smith, and Peter Jordan. In a few years these Junior partners bought the business, and it continued under their name until it was absorbed by American Type Founders, Incorporated, in 1892.

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*The Boston Side of the Family*

The story of the Boston side of the American Type Founders family is much the same. Samuel Nelson Dickinson was a typographer in the Boston Type and Stereotype Foundry. In 1829 he struck out for himself and began business as a printer. Mr. Dickinson found that he could not get from any foundry in the city the kind of type his tastes demanded, but he was not a man to be put off easily. He decided to make his own type, and the style known as SCOTCH FACE was modeled by him in 1837, and cut and cast to his order by Alexander Wilson & Son of Edinburgh, Scotland. When Dickinson died his foundry passed into other hands, and for a number of years did business under the name of Phelps,

Dalton & Co. In 1892 it was one of the most important of the foundries that merged to form American Type Founders, Incorporated.

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*The Formation of American Type Founders, Incorporated*

1892 was an important year for the printing industry. The invention of the linotype and other automatic composing machines lost for the foundry type manufacturer most of his market. To meet this competition drastic steps had to be taken. Representatives of 25 of the leading type foundries got together. They agreed to form a company and concentrate manufacturing in a few plants to take advantage of mass production. The other plants scattered throughout the country would become distributing centers for type and anything else a printer needed. Later the four foundries which had refused to join the initial merger came in, and *American Type Founders, Incorporated* truly represented all of the foundries in existence at that time.

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*Men and Ideas*

From the date of the merger American Type Founders, Incorporated is a story of men and ideas. The best brains of the printing industry were now, so to speak, on the same team, and the company became unique in that it offered complete service to the printer both in merchandise and territorial coverage. "Everything for the printer" was the slogan adopted at the foundry, and throughout the five decades that have followed, it has been faithfully upheld.

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The merger of the 25 foundries was not without its troubles. In the first place the year was not well chosen. People were against trusts and although the new company was in no sense of the word a trust its formation had aroused the public's suspicion. To begin with, the four leading foundries in the country, which were not taken into the merger because of the exorbitant price they put on their equipment and assets, were in bitter opposition. It was also unfortunately true that although the owners of type foundries in 1892 were completely aware that consolidation was the only means

to their personal salvation, they resented it and felt themselves put upon. Mergenthaler's invention of the linotype machine had driven them together but, though birds of a feather, they were not at all reconciled to flocking together. Before the linotype machine, their chief source of revenue had come from the newspapers, and all of this business had vanished as suddenly as the dew before a July sun. They had prospered individually when a newspaper in any sizeable town could itself support a type foundry. A newspaper in fact could not afford to be too far from its source of supply. Suppose, for instance, that a newspaper in Baltimore needed immediate service and the closest foundry was in Philadelphia. The readers would simply be unable to get their papers. This meant that all over the country there were small local foundries—so many that none could grow to any size. The consolidation was the alternate to disaster. American Type Founders, Incorporated, like the country after which it was named, was the child of necessity. It was born of compromise and courage but grew and prospered through the faith of men who believed in its ultimate destiny.

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*Robert W. Nelson*

Such a man was Robert W. Nelson. It was in 1894 that he was elected a director of the company and he began his work in the face of terrific obstacles. The companies which had formed the merger had not done so with any degree of enthusiasm. They had joined because they had to and each still struggled to preserve its identity. The same year that Nelson was elected to the Board of Directors, the McKellar, Smiths & Jordan Company, for example, issued an elaborate report of its history. One line mentioned that the firm was part of American Type Founders, Incorporated but the rest of the book was concerned only with McKellar, Smiths & Jordan. The casual reader would have thought that the company was completely independent, and when it is remembered that the merger had taken place two years before the book was published, the looseness of the organization becomes appallingly apparent.

The first result of the merger had been the closing down of thirteen of the weaker foundries. This left *twelve*. New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, St. Louis, Milwaukee, Baltimore, Cleveland,

and San Francisco were each represented by a foundry, while Cincinnati and Boston had two each. All of them continued under their former owners, and the only thing these gentlemen could agree on was that American Type Founders, Incorporated was subordinate in name and fact to the local proprietors. Such a thing as company spirit was unheard of and cooperation between the various branches was non-existent.

Another factor which contributed to the general chaos was the financing of the company itself. The various type foundries which formed the merger had received stock in the new company in proportion to the assessed value of their plants and equipment. As might have been expected the valuations were liberal to the extreme and this meant the new company was vastly overcapitalized. Its liquid assets on the day it took over the type foundries were small, and "catch as catch can" competition and price cutting were the rules of the day.

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The first two years of American Type Founders, Incorporated were stormy ones and there seemed to be little hope that the infant company could survive. Anti-trust sentiment was rising all over the country, and in a few short years Teddy Roosevelt was to make his political reputation in his bouts with what he called Wall Street interests and the trusts. Although American Type Founders, Incorporated could hardly qualify as a trust it did arouse suspicion and it was attacked on all sides. Its top management had little ability and less power, and in seeking to conciliate the proprietors of the several branches it succeeded in getting along with no one. Rapidly, factions developed and these first years were marked by bitter wrangling.

In 1894, we see American Type Founders, Incorporated—a loose organization, resembling somewhat the Holy Roman Empire in its last days before Napoleon put an end to its feeble life. Its management, attempting to keep peace among its feuding branches, had been reduced to complete impotence. It was resented by all, and worse than that was hopelessly unprosperous. Two groups were fighting for control and their warfare was sharp and uncompromising. The Company's credit was impaired and the fu-

ture was as dismal as an arctic winter when Joseph W. Phinney, of the Philadelphia branch (McKellar, Smiths & Jordan) whose type designs later made him famous, persuaded Robert Wickham Nelson to investigate the company's possibilities. Nelson did. He caught the vision of what the company could be if it were properly managed and soon afterwards bought out the interests of one of the directors who had lost faith in the enterprise. Nelson knew printing and knew the company with which he was dealing. He was a down-to-earth, practical Moses and possessed those rare qualities which made him the ideal catalyst around whom the various factions could adjust their differences and compose their peace.

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One other ability Nelson had which probably helped him more than anything else. He had a keen appreciation of the skill of those talented type founders in the various branches, and considered them the unused assets of the company. Quickly he gathered around him men of promise and of talent. Joseph W. Phinney, the genius of type faces; Linn Boyd Benton, whose great skill had evolved an entirely new and better method of punch and matrix making; Henry Barth, the inventor of the first automatic type casting machine, were among the first that Nelson recognized and provided the means by which they could develop their own ability.

Naturally, all was not smooth sailing. Nelson needed courage and that he had aplenty. Although he began as an unsalaried director he gave all of his time and all of his boundless energy to making American Type Founders a going concern. His optimism and courageous spirit were contagious. Even in the demoralized and gloomy general offices a ray of hope broke through when he united the warring factions as much as they would permit and was instrumental in having a Board of Directors elected whose members were, for the most part, able men of both parties. This was in 1894 and in that same year Nelson himself was made General Manager while his candidate for President—John E. Searles—was elected. Searles accepted the position on one condition. That condition was that Nelson was to assume all but the legalistic duties of the office and his proposition was immediately accepted.

*Nelson, a General Manager*

For the next seven years events moved rapidly. Nelson's constructive program went forward. His first act as General Manager was to order the signs of the old established type foundries to be taken down and replaced by the sign of American Type Founders, Incorporated. This was equivalent to cutting the Gordian knot and, needless to say, there were heartaches and bitter resentment. Still, down came the signs and Nelson saw to it that the new sign would shine with even greater lustre. The time that American Type Founders, Incorporated was suppressed by its subordinate companies had come to an end. A new era had commenced. The printer, before the formation of American Type Founders, was bedeviled by variations in line and design on what was supposed to be the same type face. Each foundry did as it pleased, and deliberately made variations in its type faces to retain the trade of the printers who were its customers. Like the Caucus Race that the Mock Turtle directed in "Alice in Wonderland" the American printers were in a hopeless state of confusion. Everybody raced but nobody won. Round and round they went, and the foundries themselves were no better off. Standard faces had to be carried by all of them and the scramble for new faces was producing designs as unbalanced as the Mad Hatter.

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*Order Out of Chaos*

American Type Founders brought order out of chaos by standardizing both line and design on the basic faces. Efficient methods made type casting once more a profitable business, and assured the printer of prompt and excellent service. Type casting had come of age and Nelson was responsible for its maturity. He had given it the room to grow.

During his term as General Manager, one decisive act followed another. The company had in the Barth Automatic Type Casting Machine and in the Benton Punch & Matrix Engraving Machine two assets which became sources of extraordinary economies in type production. Around these machines in 1897, just 5 years after the company was organized, Nelson established a type designing department—a radical innovation in the printing field. Before,

these new type faces were created at the casual suggestion of artists, or anyone else who decided to have something "new." The result, as might have been expected, was a jumble.

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To James W. Phinney was given the job of *processing* type faces. He responded with the Cushing, Howland, Jenson, Old Style, De Vinne, outline and shaded, and a dozen or more which were of tremendous value to the company. After 18 months of Phinney's work, American Type Founders was justified in its claim "leader of type fashions." Nelson also ordered the manufacture of 100 Barth Automatic Type Casting Machines for use in the company's foundries. Hitherto they had struggled along with only one Benton Punch and Matrix Engraving Machine and six Barth Type Casting Machines among them.

When this was done, Nelson threw himself into the work of issuing specimen books. Day and night he pushed for the completion of this project and catalogues of equipment, machinery and general supplies were provided for the customer. Even the overseas market was not neglected for special specimen books were published with accents for Spanish and South American printers. The new type designing department began carefully indexing the confused welter of unrelated and irregular type faces into families of type. This made it possible to achieve unity, harmony and emphasis in printed matter. The service enlarged the market for type, and the periodic release of new designs was marked by a sizeable advance in fashion type along modern lines.

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Yes, Nelson's work paid off. In the second year after he had assumed the de facto leadership under Searles, the Company earned its first dividend, and this in spite of fierce and often unfair and unscrupulous competition. Nelson's energy, decision, and unfailing good judgment had in a very short time made American Type Founders first among all of the organizations catering to the printer.

*Nelson Becomes President*

In 1901, Searles resigned as President, and the Board of Directors immediately named Nelson to succeed him. His election was a foregone conclusion as there was no one more qualified than he. Actually, he merely assumed in name the leadership that he already carried in fact. Nelson's presidency lasted for 25 years. He remained the head of the company he had done so much to build, until his death in 1926. The character of the man is clearly shown by a statement he made to an associate shortly after he had become the titular head of the company. He said, "I had to choose between two policies. The company might succeed if I reduced the number of selling houses and limited the sales force or, in other words, cut service to a minimum. However, I did not want small success. I deliberately followed a course diametrically opposed to this. I thought it best to carry American Type Founders' products in complete stocks in each great printing center and at strategic points. Also, I thought it essential to maintain an adequate sales force."

Nelson certainly gambled, but he gambled on himself and the men whom he had gathered around him. He had confidence in their ability and events proved that his faith was more than justified. His policies though daring took heed of the future. He closed selling houses that were not serving their purpose, and established others in places that would enable them to function to the best interest of the customer. These methods earned the company goodwill. His plan of widely distributed service had its counterpart in concentration of manufacturing and resulted in immense economies and increased effectiveness. When he began his administration American Type Founders, Incorporated had twelve foundries. When he died there was but one, but its products far exceeded both in quality and quantity the original twelve.

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Nelson was primarily a type man. Type was the chief product of his company and profits were based on its sale. Then, too, he was influenced to a large extent by Phinney who was his constant adviser. When Nelson had become American Type Founders, Incorporated's General Manager, the industry was badly demoral-

ized. It had lost its newspaper business and he knew that a solvent future depended on a never ceasing succession of new type faces of a new order of type design. Type which could be used for text pages as well as for display pages was developed and is now known as publicity type. It was Nelson who also conceived the idea of type families, mentioned earlier, which proved to be of such value both esthetically and economically to the printer and had such a marvelous effect on type sales. It was the master idea in modern type making and it was wholly Nelson's, who was also responsible for the omitting of many old faces and the substitution of newer and more lively ones.

There is a class of men today known as *professional* management. They have, by and large, succeeded the entrepreneur, or the daring individualist who made his own laws. Business has become a science and there is little room left for the lone wolf. Nelson was a forerunner of this class. He represented the interests of the stockholder and was a believer in fair and just business methods. In 1894, the printing trade was infested with manufacturers whose main effort was to undersell the reputable producer by cheapening the quality of the product. In spite of the pressure these men could bring to bear on him, Nelson took a firm stand. He prohibited the sale of their goods in American Type Founders, Incorporated's sales houses, and gave his active support to the better sort of manufacturing.

Every project of education in the industry won his adherence. He warred against the shoddy manufacturer, and his every act was deliberate and taken only after he had gauged its effect on the industry as a whole. In him printing found a benefactor, and though his actions might be considered as "enlightened selfishness" they were for the good of all.

For instance, when he entered the business, competition was wild and unregulated among those who catered to the printing trade. The doctrine of "laissez-faire" was at its heyday. Underselling was the accepted practice and discounts were given as the seller chose. This was not Nelson's way. He was one supplier who be-

lieved in equal prices to all and they were printed for all to see. His honesty and integrity of character gained him the respect and trust of his customers and even his competitors.

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*Kelly and his Press*

Nelson, as has been said, was a type man. However, his mind was flexible and on an occasion when an employee, who had won his good opinion as a salesman, submitted ideas for a printing press of a new description, he secured Nelson's complete backing.

1911 was a landmark in American Type Founders, Incorporated's history. William M. Kelly was engaged by the company to develop a fast automatic *job press* which would not only bring down the cost of production, but would improve the quality of commercial printing. Kelly, supported by the inventive genius of L. G. Barber and several other engineers, came up with the forerunner of the modern Kelly Press. When Kelly and his staff began work, economic conditions in the United States were not good. Business had stagnated, but Nelson was a man of vision. He gave them his unstinted help, plus a group of able assistants and threw the company's resources behind the project. For three years, Kelly and his men worked and Nelson's faith was justified. The press was produced, and in 1914 the printer was supplied with a line of high speed, automatic flat bed cylinder presses, named after Mr. Kelly, which were the first successful machines of this kind. Today, the thousands of Kelly presses all over the world are testimonials to the skill and craftsmanship of their inventor and the men who made them.

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The war in Europe had begun when the press was ready for distribution. Costs had soared and tools had doubled in price. In spite of these ominous conditions, Nelson did not hesitate. He put in a press manufacturing plant capable of producing one press a day. Soon the press and its inventor became famous. Paradoxically enough, success increased the difficulty of Nelson's undertaking as it demanded continually increasing expenditures to enlarge manufacturing facilities. Finally, a complete factory had to be built. This was accomplished in 1924, and the Kelly Press Division was

erected in Elizabeth, New Jersey, and stands today a monument to the courage and determination of Robert Wickham Nelson.

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*The Storage Vaults*

During Nelson's long regime was begun the accumulation of various master matrices. Today, American Type Founders' vaults hold some 2,500,000 individual characters. Their estimated worth is over $20,000,000, but from the point of view of *interpretive art* they are priceless. The designing of type faces is interpretive art, and it lives as certainly as the sculptor's bust or the artist's picture. It catches the spirit of the times, and it transmits to the reader the latest changes in feminine fashions, in architecture, and in modern decorations. The imagination and color that type designers put into their work of creating new faces make the term "cold print" a misnomer. Print is a warm and living art, and foundry type has as definite a place in printing as it did in the days of Benjamin Franklin.

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*Nelson's Death*

In 1926, Nelson died. His administration had been one of rich accomplishment. A lovable man, he had earned the love that was bestowed upon him. An associate remarked of him shortly after his passing: "He was loyal and appreciative of loyalty. There never was a more loyal organization, nor a pleasanter one to work with." He opened the door to opportunity and by his tireless energy kept it open. Robert L. Bullen wrote in the "*Inland Printer*": "Had his path in life led to the arts or sciences, or law, or even the church, I am convinced he would have been a great figure in any of them."

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The death of Nelson left American Type Founders ill prepared for the events which followed. Leadership had departed and the boom of the twenties departed soon after. The tidal wave of depression which swept over business in America did unusual damage to American Type Founders, which was not widely diversified and needed driving leadership to keep it ahead in the face of changing conditions in the printing industry.

The loss of Robert Wickham Nelson in reality wrote finis to the first phase of the history of his company. At last it became necessary for the company's creditors to take matters into their own hands. They almost literally drafted a new executive staff to attempt to rescue the failing company. There were black days ahead when it was discovered that the assets of the company were grossly exaggerated and the liabilities were not only of a serious financial nature, but also extended to the company's manufacturing methods, and sales organizations. Finally the new management decided that the best way out of the dilemma, and the only sound step on the long pull back to financial security was to enter a petition in voluntary bankruptcy.

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By 1936 American Type Founders had fought its way back and was released from court jurisdiction. Thomas Roy Jones and the other men who had guided the company through the tedious days of reorganization had put it once more on the road to progress. Mr. E. G. Williams, now the president of American Type Founders, who had come to the company with me in the grim days of 1932, had played well his role of Comptroller. Already the management, aware of the past, was laying plans toward broadening the operating base to offset to some extent the cyclical variations, to which all capital goods businesses, and especially printing press manufacturing, are subject. Attention was directed toward strengthening the sales force of the company. Mr. Frederick B. Heitkamp came into the company to take charge of the expanded sales activities, and is now Vice President of ATF Incorporated.

As a basis for expansion and diversification, careful surveys were made. With the permission of the stockholders, profits were plowed back into the business, and when the company had the financial strength it embarked on the program. The first step was to enter the offset field.

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*The Offset Field*

An industrial revolution was going on in graphic arts. The field of offset offered a rich opportunity for early development. It was a chance that American Type Founders seized, and, on Novem-

ber 11, 1938, the Webendorfer-Wills Company, manufacturers of lithographic printing presses, Mt. Vernon, New York, was purchased. John F. Webendorfer, its founder and owner, was made a Vice-President of American Type Founders, and in him the company secured one of the foremost press designers and engineers in the country. Everywhere, printers were interested in the new offset presses which could be used either in combination letterpress-offset shops or in special offset plants. It enabled American Type Founders to remain unique in its ability to supply the graphic arts with "everything the printer requires."

The line now consists of some 4,000 different items, and includes not only the type and machinery manufactured by the company itself, but many other items produced by independent manufacturers for American Type Founders and distributed through its sales offices.

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*The Second World War*

1939 saw the German panzer divisions sweep over Poland, and once again the world was at war. During those hectic days that followed before Pearl Harbor, American Type Founders prepared for a conflict which its management knew was inevitable. The plans were carefully laid, and the swing to *arms production* had already begun on a limited scale when the Company accepted orders from the British Purchasing Commission before actual hostilities between this country and the Axis powers started. The headlines announcing the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor were hardly yesterday's news when these plans were put into action. Except for the Type Foundry itself, the manufacturing facilities of the main plant were totally converted to war work.

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In addition, the company leased two plants in Newark from the United States Government to expand its efforts. The "*Avenue L*" plant concentrated its work on the manufacture of radar plumbing and starters for the Air Corps. Fragmentary bombs, rocket motors, gun mounts for tanks and armored cars, and miscellaneous ordnance supplies were made at the *Waverly plant.*

In Fitchburg, Massachusetts, the *Cowdrey Division*, part of the facilities of which were leased from the Government, and part bought outright by the company, produced small arms and other army ordnance material.

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The *Philharmonic Radio Corporation* was purchased in 1944, and enabled American Type Founders to furnish electronic equipment to the Navy. It might be said here, that the company had been considering entering the electronics field for two years before the war. Management had studied an idea to record sound-on-film, and an organization—purely a development project—had been established to perfect this idea. The company was, therefore, in a position to manufacture sound recording devices when the armed services had vital need of them. In all, the company operated twelve plants. After the war, the Philharmonic Radio Corporation was sold, but *Frederick Hart & Co.*, which was purchased in 1944, to make small precision parts for the armed forces, was available to continue American Type Founders work in the electronics field.

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After the war, the company's plans were reviewed. Those plants which played no part in the post-war program of the company were either returned to the Government or sold outright. The corporate structure was being put into final shape and we were building solidly.

In January 1945, when the war was in its final stages, the Daystrom Corporation in Olean and Friendship, New York, makers of tubular chrome furniture, and Daystrom Laminates, Incorporated, in Daystrom, North Carolina in the hardwood-plywood field, were purchased. These, together with Frederick Hart & Company and American Type Founders, Incorporated, now compose the *ATF* family.

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The great diversity of the manufactured products of these companies made the formation of ATF Incorporated a necessity. In

this case, the usual process was reversed and the child gave birth to the parent. ATF Incorporated, now over two years old, is purely an administrative organization. It furnishes experts in various lines, whose duties are to give assistance to the managements of the associates in the operation of their businesses. In this way, each company is provided a type of aid which would be impossible for it to have if it were operating independently. Each company in the ATF family has its own autonomous management.

The parent company is, in reality a small management team *which concentrates* on over-all policy, *integrates* the affairs of the whole *and allows* each company to retain its individual characteristics, and its identity with its community. The core of this team is a management which, within fifteen years, has expanded sales tenfold from four million to forty million dollars, net worth from two million three hundred thousand dollars to about sixteen million dollars, and converted losses which had exceeded two million dollars in a single year to profits of over two and a half million dollars. Stemming from American Type Founders, this management has carried on the tradition of initiative and foresight of its founders, has built solidly, and has demonstrated the flexibility of mind and organization required to grow in a constantly changing economic and social environment.

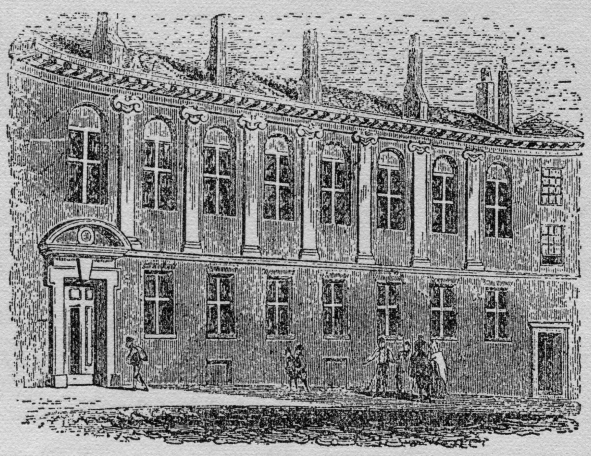
And now, *Gentlemen*, in conclusion:

American Type Founders is an important unit in a family of industries. The evolution of the corporate structure which grew out of American Type Founders has been a step-by-step process. Many changes have come about, but the spirit remains the same. The present management is conscious of its distinguished heritage, stemming from the small type foundry that began in 1735 at Germantown in the Province of Pennsylvania. It is proud of the inventive genius of such men as Benjamin Franklin, James Ronaldson, Archibald Binney, and Robert Wickham Nelson, who have written their names across the pages of its history.

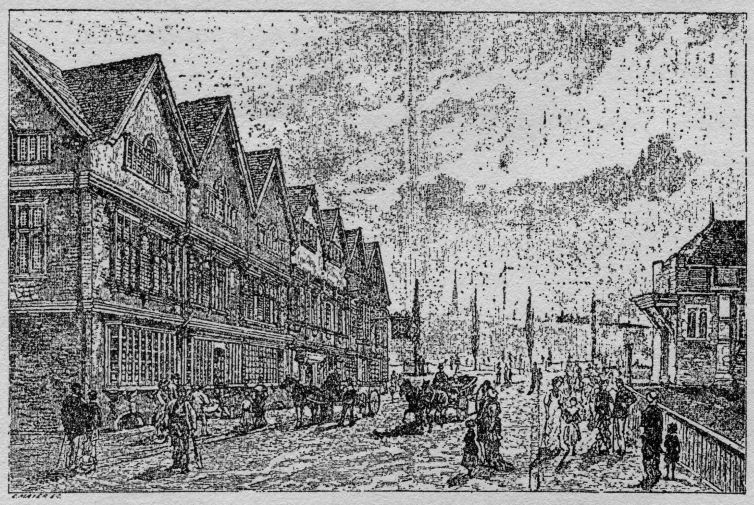
The influence of the past carries on into the present; and, with firm faith, *American Type Founders, Incorporated* and *ATF Incorporated* look to the future.

America, too, must look forward—with confidence and determination!

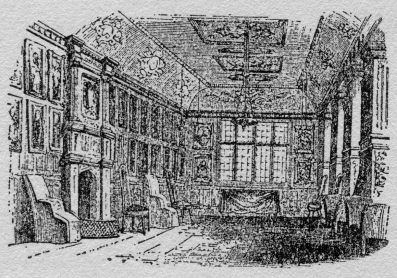
THE END



*"Actorum Memores simul affectamus Agenda!"*

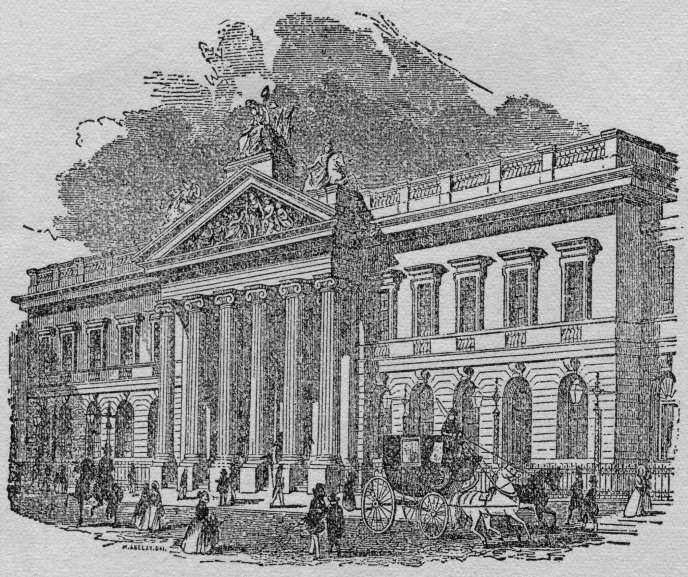


THIS NEWCOMEN ADDRESS, *dealing with Printing in America, was delivered at a National Newcomen Dinner of The Newcomen Society of England, held in the Ballroom of The Pierre, at New York, N.Y., U.S.A., on November 18, 1948, at which* MR. JONES, *the guest of honor, was introduced by* DR. CHESTER I. BARNARD, *President, The Rockefeller Foundation, New York, member of the New York Committee, in American Newcomen. The dinner was presided over by the* SENIOR VICE-PRESIDENT FOR NORTH AMERICA, *in this British honorary Society whose headquarters are at London.*



"The designing of type faces is interpretive art, and it lives as certainly as the sculptor's bust or the artist's picture. It catches the spirit of the times, and it transmits to the reader the latest changes in feminine fashions, in architecture, and in modern decorations. The imagination and color that type designers put into their work of creating new faces make the term 'cold print' a misnomer. Print is a warm and living art, and foundry type has as definite a place in printing as it did in the days of Benjamin Franklin."

—Thomas Roy Jones



"The printer, before the formation of American Type Founders, was bedeviled by variations in line and design on what was supposed to be the same type face. Each foundry did as it pleased, and deliberately made variations in its type faces to retain the trade of the printers who were its customers. Like the Caucus Race that the Mock Turtle directed in 'Alice in Wonderland' the American printers were in a hopeless state of confusion. One of the great contributions of the new company to the printer and to his art was the numbering of type sizes to permit the craftsman to produce easily a pleasing uniformity and symmetry on the printed page."

—Thomas Roy Jones

"American Type Founders is conscious of its distinguished heritage, stemming from the small type foundry that began in 1735 at Germantown in the Province of Pennsylvania. It is proud of the inventive genius of such men as Benjamin Franklin, James Ronaldson, Archibald Binney, and Robert Wickham Nelson, who have written their names across the pages of its history.

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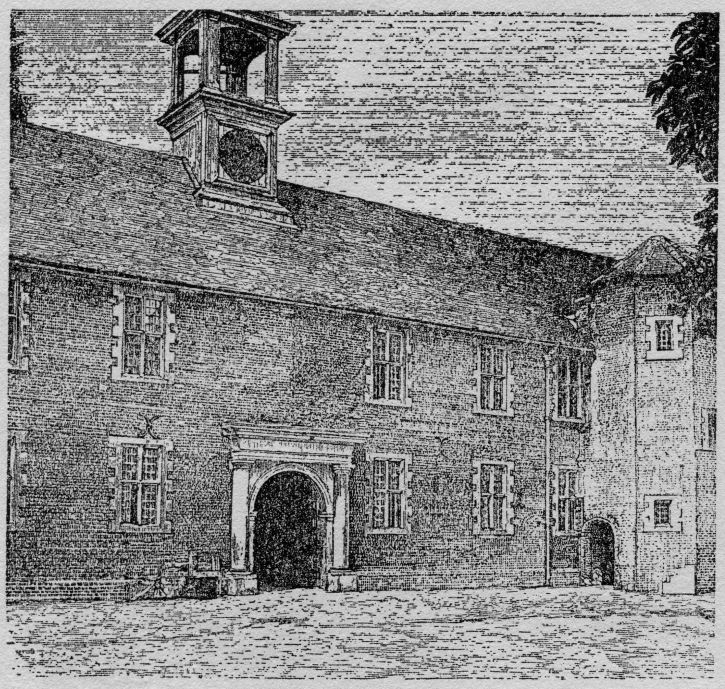

AMERICAN NEWCOMEN *takes satisfaction in this Newcomen manuscript, whose colorful recital tells so much of the history of Printing in America and of the lives and struggles of those sturdy pioneers who laid the foundations. Lessons anew may be learned from the vision and determination and grit of these early Americans. Theirs was unusual opportunity, through the printed word, to extend education and promote clear thinking among the colonists. Today, in a broad land, Printing has continuing opportunity—to serve America's best interests.*

# THE NEWCOMEN SOCIETY OF ENGLAND

## *IN NORTH AMERICA*

BROADLY, *this British Society has as its purposes: to increase an appreciation of American-British traditions and ideals in the Arts and Sciences, especially in that bond of sympathy for the cultural and spiritual forces which are common to the two countries; and, secondly, to serve as another link in the intimately friendly relations existing between Great Britain and the United States of America.*

*The Newcomen Society centers its work in the history of Material Civilization, the history of: Industry, Invention, Engineering, Transportation, the Utilities, Communication, Mining, Agriculture, Finance, Banking, Economics, Education, and the Law—these and correlated historical fields. In short, the background of those factors which have contributed or are contributing to the progress of Mankind.*

*The best of British traditions, British scholarship, and British ideals stand back of this honorary society, whose headquarters are at London. Its name perpetuates the life and work of Thomas Newcomen (1663-1729), the British pioneer, whose valuable contributions in improvements to the newly invented Steam Engine brought him lasting fame in the field of the Mechanic Arts. The Newcomen Engines, whose period of use was from 1712 to 1775, paved a way for the Industrial Revolution. Newcomen's inventive genius preceded by more than 50 years the brilliant work in Steam by the world-famous James Watt.*

*"The roads you travel so briskly*
*lead out of dim antiquity,*
*and you study the past chiefly because*
*of its bearing on the living present*
*and its promise for the future."*

—LIEUTENANT GENERAL JAMES G. HARBORD,
K.C.M.G., D.S.M., LL.D., U.S. ARMY (RET.)

(1866-1947)

*Late American Member of Council at London*
*The Newcomen Society of England*