

Obituary

ROLLO GABRIEL SILVER

Rollo Gabriel Silver, pioneer in the field of bibliography, educator, author, and esteemed dean of printing historians, died at his home in Boston on September 20, 1989. He is survived by his wife, Alice.

Born in New York City, June 27, 1909, he received a bachelor's degree from Brown University in 1931. During the depression he worked as an assistant buyer at B. Altman Company, leaving there in 1934 for the Boston area where he became managing director of the Better Service Garage at Brockton, Massachusetts. He took his master's degree in English in 1941 at Boston University, and during that time his interest in printing history was kindled. Early on, his research led him to the American Antiquarian Society's fount of information and in 1940 he began a correspondence with Clarence S. Brigham, the start of a long and fruitful association with the Society.

He entered the U.S. Army Quartermaster Corps in 1943, and, following World War II, served as assistant director of the Army's Climatic Research Laboratory at Lawrence, Massachusetts, until 1947. During military service he continued his pursuits in bibliographical research. After earning his bachelor's degree in Library Science at Simmons College in 1948 he worked as Reference Librarian at the Peabody Institute Library in Baltimore until returning to Simmons in 1950 to teach Library Science. He retired from the teaching profession in 1964 to devote his time to research and to travel. (He described it as 'merely switching from the producing end to the consuming end of the library profession.') The rest of his life was dedicated to painstaking research and the pellucid authorship of several books and countless articles, monographs, and lectures on the history of American printing.

He maintained an active involvement with organizations devoted to printing history and through his leadership and enthusias-

tic support he inspired students and other scholars in the field. A true bibliophile, his collections were outstanding. As well as a wealth of material on the history of the book arts, they included an extensive collection of Walt Whitman's poetry.

Elected to membership in the American Antiquarian Society in October 1951, he served on the Ballot Committee, the Membership Committee, and as a member of the Advisory Board to the Program in the History of the Book in American Culture. Throughout the years he was a regular meeting attendant and a familiar presence in the Society's reading room. His writings frequently appeared in the Society's *Proceedings*: 'Publishing in Boston, 1726-57: The Accounts of Daniel Henchman' (1956); 'Government Printing in Massachusetts Bay, 1700-50' (1958); 'Efficiency Improved: The Genesis of the Web Press in America' (1970); 'History of R. Hoe & Co.' (1972); 'Aprons Instead of Uniforms: The Practice of Printing, 1776-87' (1977).

His published books include *Letters Written by Walt Whitman to His Mother*, 1936; *The Book in America*, co-authored with Hellmut Lehmann-Haupt, et al., 1951; *Baltimore Book Trade 1800-1825*, 1954; *Typefounding in America 1787-1825*, 1965; *The American Printer 1787-1825*, 1967.

Rollo Silver was an honorary member of the Bibliographical Society of America; a member and past president of the Society of Printers, Boston; member of the Wynkyn De Worde Society, London; fellow of the Royal Society of Arts; former trustee of Boston University.

He was awarded an honorary Doctorate of Letters at Brown University in 1986.

In 1977, the American Printing History Association honored Rollo Silver with its annual award. In his acceptance speech he admonished the group to be aware of the serious need for historians and scholars to go beyond the times of the Colonial Printer and to organize the vast amount of existing information documenting the technical developments of nineteenth-century print-

ing, towards developing a definitive history of American printing. His recommendation was for a full documentation, with 'all the footnotes fit to print.'

Roderick D. Stinehour

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