

SOME NOTES ON EARLY AMERICAN LITHOGRAPHY

BY CHARLES HENRY TAYLOR

IT is most appropriate that a paper on early American lithography should be read in Boston, because in Massachusetts was born the man who produced the first lithograph, of record, in the United States, and because in Boston was developed the first lithographic business of any moment in this country. In this paper I have not attempted to give an exact chronology of early American lithography or to take up the technique of the lithographic process, but merely to present a few notes on the earliest lithographers and to mention some of their earliest productions.

BASS OTIS

Bass Otis was born in Bridgewater, Mass, July 17, 1784, in the section of the town then known as Scytheville. He was apprenticed to a scythemaker, but developed such talent for drawing portraits that his father put him into the studio of Gilbert Stuart in Boston, where he studied for three years, and became a portrait painter of considerable ability.

Bass Otis' lithograph in the *Analectic Magazine* for July, 1819, marks the beginning of American lithography. This lithograph of a mill scene with a pond in the foreground is more in the nature of an etching on stone, but it is signed "Bass Otis Lithographic." The plate is accompanied by a long article on lithography, which begins as follows: "In this number, we present our readers with a specimen of *American Lithography*: the design and execution from beginning to end—from the drawing to the impression inclusive—is by Mr. B. Otis; who, following the suggestions of

judge Cooper, and Dr. Brown, of Alabama, has by means of their hints, and his own more successful improvements, produced the specimen now submitted. The drawing was made on a stone from Munich, presented to the American Philosophical Society, by Mr. Thomas Dobson of this city."

A smaller lithograph, dated 1820, is the only other evidence of Mr. Otis' work in this line.

Bass Otis went from Boston to Philadelphia, and took with him letters of introduction from Stuart, who was well known in the Quaker City. While in Philadelphia he produced these two lithographs, and experimented with mezzotinting and aquatinting, as is proven by specimens of his work still in existence. His forte, however, was portrait painting, and he was in great vogue for the painting of likenesses of people after death, usually from descriptions by relatives and friends. This accounts for much of the variability in the technique of these portraits.

About 1837 he came to Boston, and is listed in the Boston directory for that year. He then returned to Philadelphia, and came back to Boston in 1846, and lived at 17 Bennet Street and 8 South Bennet Street until 1855, when he moved to 16 Kneeland Street for the years 1856-1857. He then returned to Philadelphia, and died there on November 3, 1861. Under Death Notices in the Philadelphia Press of November 6, 1861, appears: "OTIS—on the 3d inst. Mr. Bass Otis in the 77th year of his age."

BARNET & DOOLITTLE

Following Otis, and prior to 1825, Barnet & Doolittle in New York and Henry Stone of Washington produced lithographs.

In the American Journal of Science and Arts for October, 1821, appears the following:

Art. XIX. Notice of the Lithographic Art, or the art of multiplying designs, by substituting Stone for Copper Plate, with introductory remarks by the Editor.

All the drawings in the present number are printed on stone by Messrs. Barnet & Doolittle,¹ whom we are happy to introduce to our readers as artists in this comparatively new department. Having availed themselves in Paris of a regular course of practical instruction, they have brought to this country, not only the skill but the peculiar materials and press necessary to the execution of the art, and are now establishing themselves in New-York. The designs in this number are, by no means, presented as *chef-d'œuvres* in lithography, but merely as accurate representations of the objects, with sufficient neatness for designs of the class to which they belong. Messrs. Barnet & Doolittle have in their possession, a great variety of lithographic prints, which sufficiently evince the adaptedness of the art to an elegant as well as common style of execution. The finest things done in this way are really very beautiful; and they possess a softness which is peculiarly their own. Still Lithography is not a rival, it is merely an auxiliary to copper plate engraving, which, especially in the higher branches of the art, must still retain the pre-eminence which it possesses.

But the regular introduction of Lithography into this country must still be a subject of congratulation; and we trust the American public will give this fine art vigor by an adequate patronage.

Nothing is known about Barnet, and if either of the two went to Paris it must have been he. The firm is not listed in the New York Directories of the period. Doolittle must have been Amos Doolittle, the copper-plate engraver, whose prints of the Battle of Lexington and Concord are so well known. Curiously enough the *American Journal of Science and Arts* gives us no further information about the early American development of lithography.

In 1822 J. V. Seaman published in New York, Sir James Edward Smith's "*Grammar of Botany.*" The last paragraph under "Notice to the New York Edition" in this book reads:

The publisher feels a becoming gratification in informing the readers of the work, that the beautiful and appropriate drawings, which so highly embellish it, are specimens of American Lithography. They are from the pencil of Mr. Stansbury,

¹Their establishment is at No. 23 Lumber-street, and orders are addressed to them there, or through Messrs. A. T. Goodrich & Co., Booksellers, Broadway, New-York.

and were executed at the Lithographic Press of Barnet & Doolittle of this City.

This therefore was the first book containing lithographic plates published in America.

HENRY STONE

In 1823 there was published in Baltimore by James Lovegrove "The Timber Merchant's Guide." In the back of this book are a series of lithographs, showing how trees may be cut to the best advantage for ship timber, and each one of these prints is marked "Henry Stone, Lhtog. Er." There are thirty of these prints, and there is no reference anywhere in the book to the method of illustration, or anything about Henry Stone. He was, however, an engraver who lived in Washington, and did engraving on copper and afterward several pieces of lithographic work. "The Timber Merchants' Guide," is the second book published containing lithographic plates made in America.

J. B. MARTIN

Sometime before 1827 J. B. Martin was working as a lithographer in Richmond, Va. He was a miniature portrait painter and engraver by profession. He engraved in stipple in 1822. His lithograph portrait of John Randolph of Roanoke was printed by Cephas G. Childs, but is signed as "Drawn on Stone & Published by J. B. Martin, Richm'd." His lithographs appear in nos. 2 and 3 of the "Spirit of the Old Dominion" published in Richmond in 1827.

JOHN PENDLETON

We now come to the imporant period in Boston beginning with 1825. In the Boston News Letter of November 5, 1825, appears the following:

LITHOGRAPHY

This beautiful and highly useful art which has lately made great advancement in Europe, we are happy to announce is in successful operation in this city, being introduced by Mr. J. Pendleton, who has made it his study in Europe. Messrs.

Wells & Lilly have in press and will soon issue a genuine edition of Sir Astley Cooper's Lectures, from the copy published under his sanction and edited by F. Tyrrell, Esq., with plates which have been drawn on stone by A. Bowen, and Lithographed by Mr. Pendleton.

The first two volumes of this book were printed in 1825, and the third in 1828. In the last volume only are there any illustrations—two lithographic plates illustrating hip disease. The first plate shows four male nude figures in outline with very little shading, and the second plate illustrates corsage by bandages which Sir Astley Cooper adopted for the cure of the disease. These plates were drawn by Edwards and printed by Pendleton.

PENDLETON & BOWEN

One of the reasons for the delay in the appearance of the Astley Cooper work appears in the Boston News-Letter of February 4, 1826, when the following notice of dissolution of partnership was printed:

DISSOLUTION OF PARTNERSHIP

The Partnership heretofore existing under the firm of Pendleton & Bowen, is this day dissolved by mutual consent. All persons having claims against the firm will present them to W. S. Pendleton, who is authorized to settle the accounts of the concern. Those indebted will please make immediate payment.

W. S. PENDLETON
ABEL BOWEN

Boston, Jan. 31, 1826.

W. S. Pendleton respectfully informs his friends and the public, that the above Business will be carried on by him in Conjunction with his Brother, who will add to the Establishment the advantage of

LITHOGRAPHIC PRINTING

Orders for Printing on Copper, or Designs and Printing on Stone, will be attended to with care and fidelity, on application at the Establishment in Harvard Place, opposite the Old South. To those whose occasions require Fac Similes, Maps, Circulars, &c., to which this art is peculiarly adapted, Specimens will be exhibited, and all information given by applying as above.

Abel Bowen respectfully informs his friends and the public that he still continues his business at No. 2 Congress Square, in Congress Street, where all orders for Engraving and Copper-Plate Printing will be thankfully received, and promptly attended.

Abel Bowen apparently did not become interested in lithography, but preferred to keep on with his wood engraving. He undoubtedly "tried his hand" at lithography, but there is no known lithographic print by him in existence. The firm, Bowen & Pendleton, by the way, did a copper plate engraving and copper plate printing business on Harvard Place opposite the Old South Church. In addition Abel Bowen did wood engraving. He was the first wood engraver in Boston, and the second to practice it in America—the first being Dr. Anderson of New York. He was equally facile in both arts, and he had no competitor in wood engraving. In fact the growth and spread of wood engraving in America was very largely due to the influence of Abel Bowen.

WILLIAM S. PENDLETON

William S. Pendleton went ahead and established the first lithographic business in the United States, as is evidenced by the publication in the Boston Monthly Magazine for December, 1825, of the following notice:

LITHOGRAPHY

Specimens of this art have, from time to time, reached us, and excited considerable attention amongst our artists, as well as curiosity amongst our lovers of the arts; but still nothing was done to bring lithography into this country until within a few months, when Mr. John Pendleton commenced an establishment for lithography in this city. Perhaps a little before his return from France, a few attempts had been made in the city of New York, but they had not reached us, nor have they yet. Mr. Pendleton is a young gentleman of taste and talents, from the State of New York, who was on a visit to Paris, on business of an entirely different nature, and becoming pleased with lithography, put himself immediately under the first artists of France, and acquired, as we believe, a thorough knowledge of the art and the principles on which it is founded. With this

stock of information, and with a great love of the profession, and, in addition, a good supply of the proper stone and other materials for the pursuit of the art, he came to Boston and engaged with his brother, a copper-plate printer of established celebrity. With great liberality, he has furnished stone, chalk and pencils, to several painters, who are making great progress in lithographic drawing. The sketch which is given in this number of our Magazine, is merely a specimen of the art amongst us. Messrs. Edwards, Johnson, Hoogland, Penniman and Alexander, artists well known in this city, are engaged in doing something in lithography to exhibit to the public, which may soon be expected to appear, and others no doubt will follow their example. We shall, from time to time, not only keep our readers apprised of the progress which our enterprising and gifted artists are making, but also of what has been done and may be doing; and often present our patrons with specimens of the art itself, in our pages.

In this magazine in 1825 and 1826, appeared several specimens of the work, chiefly portraits, drawn by Edwards or Alexander or Johnston, and lithographed by Pendleton.

Christopher C. Baldwin, in his *Diary* (printed by the American Antiquarian Society, p. 331) speaks of Pendleton as follows:

I was introduced to W. S. Pendleton the lithographic printer of Boston. He was the first who introduced this curious art into the United States. He exhibited the first specimens of it in Boston in 1824. He gave me this account of himself. He was born in the City of New York in 1795, and at an early age was put to learn the trade of a copper-plate engraver. His father was a native of Liverpool, England, and was captain of a New York and Liverpool packet, whose wife was by birth a native of England, but at the time of his marriage, a widow lady residing in New York. He was lost in a storm at sea in 1798, leaving two children—W. S., above named, and a younger son. William S. (I think his name is William), after coming of age, went in 1819 to Washington, where he pursued his business as engraver for about a year, when he was joined by his brother, and, mounting their packs, they started in pursuit of their fortune to the unknown West. When they reached Pittsburgh his brother returned, having been invited by the Peels of Philadelphia to make an exhibition of the "Court of Death"; and W. S. remained there. He could find no employment in his trade and, being driven to his

wits, betook to teaching music. He gave lessons upon the flute and pianoforte, and continued in this business till 1824 when he returned to New York, and soon afterwards went to Boston, where he resumed the business of engraving. A merchant by the name of Thaxter having brought out from Paris an apparatus for printing lithographing circulars, but not being acquainted with using it sufficiently to operate it to advantage, was glad to dispose of it to Mr. Pendleton, who, by his ingenuity, was able in a short time to put [it] in successful operation. His brother was now in Paris, and having communicated with him upon the subject, they formed a copartnership, and a press was soon established in Boston, where he has continued from 1824 to the present time. He is an intelligent and enterprising man.

William S. Pendleton was a man of great business ability and continued the largest and best lithographic establishment in the United States up to 1836, when he sold out to Thomas Moore. He offered every facility to artists and others who might wish to learn to draw on stone, as the following names will show: D. C. Johnston, the so-called "American Cruikshank"; Rembrandt Peale; William Rimmer, the anatomist, whose statue of Alexander Hamilton stands on the Commonwealth Avenue Parkway near Arlington Street; M. E. D. Brown; F. H. Lane, afterwards famous as a marine painter; John Cheney, the engraver; J. H. Bufford, afterwards for so many years one of the leading lithographers in the United States; Joseph Gear, musician and etcher; Alexander J. Davis, famous architectural draftsman, and many others.

Pendleton was at first in business on Graphic Court, which led off Washington Street, opposite the head of Franklin. He afterwards moved his place of business to another Graphic Court on the opposite side of Washington street, about where Macullar Parker's clothing store is now located. He had a store where lithographic prints, drawing materials, stationery, etc., were for sale. He printed portraits, maps, sheet music, fashion plates, book illustrations, and every conceivable kind of work to which lithography could be adapted.

At the beginning of my interest in the subject, in 1905, a fortunate chance led to the discovery in Cambridge, Mass., of John W. A. Scott, who was then more than ninety years of age, and who went to work for William S. Pendleton in the year 1829. Mr. Scott possessed all his faculties, including a remarkable memory, and gave me many facts regarding his early employer.

JOHN PENDLETON

John Pendleton had apparently the more artistic temperament, and was also the rolling stone of the family. He went to New York about 1828 or 1829, did lithographic work there, and then drifted to Philadelphia where he was a partner in the first lithographic firm in that city, Pendleton, Kearney & Childs.

PENDLETON, KEARNEY & CHILDS

This firm was started in 1829, Kearney was Francis Kearney and Childs was Cephas G. Childs, a noted engraver, and afterwards one of the founders, with Henry Inman, the portrait painter, of the firm of Childs & Inman.

SENEFELDER LITHOGRAPH CO.

In 1828 the Senefelder Lithograph Co. was started in Boston by Annin & Smith (William B. Annin and George G. Smith), who had previously been copper plate engravers. This firm lasted only into 1831, and was absorbed by Pendleton.

It was due to a query regarding the Senefelder firm that I first began the search for facts about early American lithography. In 1904 a print dealer appeared in my office with a lithograph of the U. S. Frigate Constitution which bore the imprint of the Senefelder Lith. Co. He stated that the Senefelder Lith. Co. was located in Cincinnati and did work about 1840. Within a year the same print, with a few slight changes, turned up with the imprint of Pendle-

ton. As a result of investigating early Boston lithographers, I found the Mr. Scott already referred to, and it was he who gave me many of the most interesting facts. Mr. Scott says that William S. Pendleton came to Boston from Canada with Alexander MacKenzie, a copper plate engraver, who had failed in business in Montreal. This was about 1819 or 1820 MacKenzie went into partnership with Abel Bowen in 1821, and presumably William S. Pendleton worked for them, and the next we hear of Pendleton was when he was in partnership with Bowen on Harvard Place in 1825.

STODART & CURRIER

In 1831 William S. Pendleton had four lithograph presses and four copper plate presses, and among his apprentices were Benjamin F. Nutting and Nathaniel Currier (born in Roxbury). The latter afterward started in business in New York in the early 1830's. He went into business with a man named Stodart forming the firm of Stodart & Currier, located at 137 Broadway in 1832. John H. Bufford worked for them as an artist. Mr. Currier's business relations with his partner were not of the happiest, and the partnership was dissolved very shortly, and Mr. Currier went into business for himself continuing as Nathaniel Currier, and then as Currier & Ives until 1890.

ANTHONY IMBERT

After Barnet & Doolittle, the first lithographer in New York, of whom we have evidence, was Anthony Imbert, whose work appears apparently for the first time in Cadwallader D. Colden's "Memoir of the Celebration of the Completion of the New York Canals," which was published in 1825. On page 349 of this book appears the following:

LITHOGRAPHICAL DEPARTMENT

As a considerable number of the printed plates of this work are in Lithography, that is literally, Drawing on Stone; it will

not perhaps be unacceptable, at the present moment, to give some very concise remarks on the history, and manner of operation, of this new art; particularly as these impressions are from the very first press, which on this side of the Atlantic, has been put into effectual operation, many abortive attempts having been made prior to Mr. Imbert's successful one. We shall be but brief in our notice on the subject as he is preparing a publication on the essential parts and uses of the Art of Lithography, which he is about to lay before the public with all convenient despatch.

In this age of discoveries not the least admirable is the Art of Lithography; it was the result of a regular and skillful series of well-planned experiments by Mr. Alois Senefelder, of Munich the capital of Bavaria. The era of discovery cannot be confined to a day or a year; he began his experiments upon Bavarian stone, from economical principles, with a view to save the expense of copper or tin plates; with a mind gifted by nature and from competent education, furnished with a good acquaintance with the mechanic powers, but chiefly with chemistry, he prosecuted his experiments to the eventual results we now witness.

The improvements on this art, since the first publication of his course of experiments, have been very rapid; in the earlier part it was chiefly applied to the more common purposes of life, by the principle of Transfer, to writings, lettering, music, &c.; but for the higher purposes of pictorial subjects, its progress has been comparatively more slow, until within a few years, say six or eight, since which in Germany, France, Italy, England, &c., it has already rivalled the best of lineal chalk and wood engravings, and upon the principle of Transfer, it is equal at least to the finest engraving that ever was or can be executed on copper, &c.

Artists, at present, chiefly practice it in the chalk, the pen and ink, or with the brush manners—or in the art of transferring drawings, writings, &c. done on transfer paper, to the stone, by which a limitless number of fac-similies may be printed.

At the first view of this art, and its peculiar mode of impress, most persons have imagined it to be the easiest and most simple thing in the world to be a Lithographer; but experience has taught the many, many thousands, who have attempted it, that nothing less than the utmost care and experience can accomplish the operation; the manipulating of the drawings is easy enough, and looks perfect on the stone, but the chemical principles, on which all the success of printing depend, cannot produce a good impression if the draughtsman, however good an artist, does not execute the work with the necessary pre-

caution. The artist must not only be a good designer, but a good chemist, and a good painter. The art does not depend so much on mechanical as chemical principles.

The leading point in this new art is through the medium of Soap, to make the repulsion of oil to water produce the curious effect of printing drawings upon stone of a certain texture.

The instruments for this kind of drawing are—first, inks similar to China or Indian ink, to be drawn on the stone with a steel pen or brush; secondly—Lithographic chalk, similar to, and worked like common black French chalk, on the stone; thirdly—transfer ink, whereby any drawing or writing made on transfer paper, is transferred positively to the stone, and may be multiplied 'ad infinitum', which in all probability will turn out to be the most useful part of the art, whereby confidential and circular letters of any description may be multiplied with the utmost despatch; as was universally practiced by both parties during the Revolutionary War in Europe, and is still exercised by every one of these Governments, as well as by men of business, thereby saving the expense of copying clerks, or transcribers; and, moreover, in the cheapest, most expeditious, and confidential manner.

Every gentleman ought to be provided with a sufficient quantity of this transfer paper and its ink, which he can use with equal facility as common ink, by only rubbing it down with rain water; if this writing is sent to a Lithographic press, a hundred or more fac similies, identical with the original manuscript may be had in a few hours at a very small expense.

Such being the history and nature of the art of Lithography every candid eye, which views these very interesting first essays of the art executed in America, but will allow, that neither Germany, France or England, could show equal specimens executed during the first six months after its introduction into these countries.

On page 353 it says:

For the annexed diagram of the Fleet, we have been obligingly favored by C. Rhind, Esq., the Commandant of the aquatic fete. This Plan was the first test of Mr. Imbert's talents as a Lithographer, and Lithographic Printer.

On page 358 it says:

Moreover, to show the full extent of our good fortune, Mr. Imbert, the Lithographer, is professionally a Marine Artist; originally he was a French Naval Officer. but long a prisoner in England, where he devoted this time of leisure, to the improvement of his talents, in the study of drawing and painting,

under a first rate emigrant artist, as a useful as well as agreeable amusement during the tedium of captivity.

Imbert was located at no. 79 Murray Street, New York, in 1825, and continued his work of lithographic publication until 1831. William Dunlap, in his "History of the Arts of Design," 1837, p. 454, says:

Lithography or drawing on stone, and taking impressions by the aid of acids, transferring innumerable copies to paper, is a very useful invention, and tends to multiply pictures, many of them of a character which diffuses taste and facilitates the progress of art. When practiced by a good designer its use is obvious. To be a good draughtsman on stone, requires the same study as to draw well on paper. It is a very pleasant occupation for females, and I have seen specimens from two young ladies, the daughters of Mr. Peter Maverick, deceased, which I thought ought to command for them an employment that would make them independent with common application.

The first lithographic establishment of which I have any knowledge was made amidst many difficulties by Mr. Imbert, of New York. They are now almost innumerable throughout the United States. But however beautiful or perfect the plates are, the credit is transferred to the master of the establishment, and the artist is sunk. This must change. The artist must be announced, and must be the *Master*.

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