

# The WAYZGOOSE GAZETTE

of the International Printing Museum, Los Angeles, California



FEATURING THE ERNEST A. LINDNER COLLECTION, THE PRINTING MUSEUM WAS FOUNDED IN 1988 BY DAVID JACOBSON AS A PUBLIC CHARITY DEDICATED TO THE PRESERVATION OF PRINTING HISTORY

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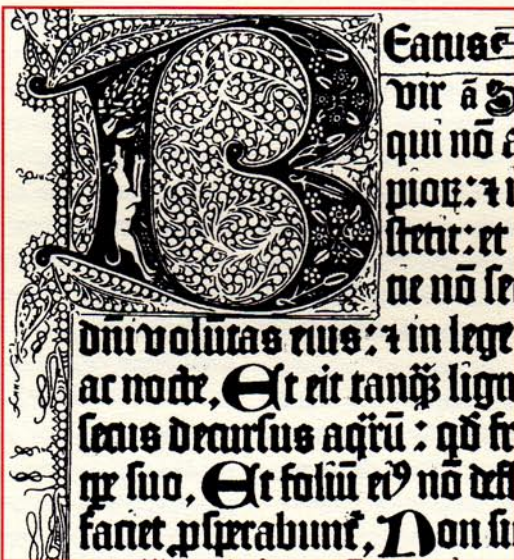
DECEMBER 1999

## *Peter Schoeffer: From the Shadow of Gutenberg to Greatness*

Johann Gutenberg. Forever his name will be associated with the invention of printing and with the first printed bible in 1455. In the shadow of this genius inventor, who developed the process to cast type and the printing press to reproduce books in quantity, was a young lad of great skill and ambition Peter Schoeffer of Gersheim. Gutenberg's reality is clouded in popular mythology, a result of the scant information about him found in contemporary court documents and hearsay—the factual information about Gutenberg amounts to only a couple of paragraphs.

Peter Schoeffer's existence, on the other hand, is firmly grounded through the testimony of his own hand, in his writings and publications from his active press, to solid evidence from his contemporaries. Though Gutenberg's name remains immortal in the history of printing, it was his former assistant Peter Schoeffer who established printing as an industry and caused it to flourish.

The records of Peter's birth or of how he specifically came to work with Gutenberg in his Mainz printing shop have not survived. It is assumed he was born around 1425 in Gersheim, Germany, to a rural family. We find this bright young man at the University of Paris in his early twenties, possibly as a law student. Peter was a



*Highlight of the 1457 Psalter, printed by Fust & Schoeffer, showing a two-color initial with tight registration.*

skilled calligrapher and manuscript copyist, for this was how he worked his way through school: in a beautiful and ornate blackletter style, Peter wrote his name in the colophon of a book of Aristotle he had finished copying in 1449. By that time, Peter already considered Mainz a second home, as indicated in this colophon.

Mainz was a powerful city in the 15th century, the seat of the archbishop at the great cathedral of Mainz on the Rhine. It was also the

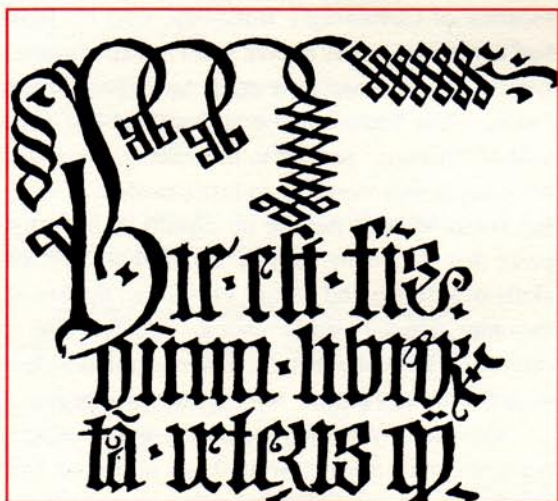
location of Gutenberg's workshop, who by 1450 had completed nearly twelve years of experimental typesetting and was now ready to engage in the "work of the books" as it was described (the concept of "printing" had yet to be understood; rather, the process was viewed as a faster method of writing books without the use of a quill). It is at this point that the young man of 25-30, with obvious skills in lettering and design, enters into the life of the older inventor, nearly twice his age. It is also at this time that Gutenberg's financial relationship with the wealthy patron, Johann Fust, also begins.

Gutenberg was the eccentric visionary whose fortunes were always around the corner, a life filled with frustrations culminating in the famous lawsuit in 1455 when Fust demanded his loan of nearly \$1 million (in relative terms today) be repaid. At the critical moment of the project when

the printing of 180 bibles was completed and the proceeds from their sale imminent, Gutenberg lost everything: the bibles, the equipment and the shop. And standing by Fust's side in the Franciscan monastery for the court proceedings was young Peter Schoeffer, who testified on Fust's behalf against his employer Gutenberg.

Johann Fust could be understood as an opportunist with resources, and Peter Schoeffer merely the pawn he used for his own objectives. Following the lawsuit, Fust set up shop in Mainz with Schoeffer as his journeyman and issued a beautiful Psalter two years later in 1457. The book is an important point in printing history for it marks the first printed book to bear the names of its printers (Fust and Schoeffer) along with the date it was printed. Remember that it is only by conjecture and other evidence that we associate Gutenberg with the printed bible in 1455. The colophon of the Psalter also bears the first printer's mark: the familiar double family crest of Fust & Schoeffer in vermilion, now the symbol for the International Association of Printing House Craftsmen Clubs who meet monthly all across the country.

The Mainz Psalters of 1457 and 1459, illustrated with this article, represent a level of technical perfection to be admired by printers of every century. The modern printer and reader must remember that in Gutenberg and Schoeffer's day, the handwritten and illuminated manuscript was the model they worked from: the early printers



Detail of the colophon of an Aristotle manuscript completed by Peter Schoeffer in 1499 while attending Paris University. His skill in lettering and design was a valuable asset in Gutenberg's Mainz workshop, and in his design of early beautiful typefaces.

sought to reproduce through typography and printing what the scribe accomplished though quill and ink, which is not always an easy task.

The production and planning of the Psalter must have begun in Gutenberg's workshop before the famous lawsuit due to the sheer amount of time needed to solve the problem of printing two-color initials. Notice the illustration (enlarged from the original) and the tight registration of the inside solid letter, printed in blue, with the surrounding ornamentation, printed in red. The text was printed in black. Now consider that all three colors were printed simultaneously in one pass on the wooden press! If you cannot appreciate the complexity of this problem and the brilliance of the solution Schoeffer arrived at, I would gather you're not a printer!

Schoeffer engraved the ornaments for the initials on a type-high piece of metal, leaving a shallow recess on the inside for the thin letter to be placed, also engraved on metal only a few millimeters thick. Being independent pieces, the ornament and initial could be removed from the press while the type in the press was inked in black; the pieces would then be placed back after being inked in red and blue. With one pull on the devil's tail (the lever bar), all three colors would be printed on the sheet in perfect register. A time consuming process, albeit, but a technically ingenious solution which resulted in one of the most beautiful printed books of all time, and a best seller in its day!

Peter Schoeffer remained a journeyman in Fust's shop for over a decade, not having achieved the status of full partner. Then, while on a book-selling trip to Paris in 1466, Fust died suddenly and Peter's career took another fortunate turn. Eventhough Fust's widow remarried the following year, Schoeffer assumed the position as head of the family and of the printing firm with his own marriage to Fust's daughter Christina that same year (it was customary for the lead journeyman to marry into the family). Now at Schoeffer's control was the largest and most significant publishing facility in all the world, and he made full use of the advantage he had.

Under the tutelage of Gutenberg, the young Schoeffer had mastered the art of punch cutting and typesetting, which when combined with his skill as a calligrapher allowed him to design and produce some of the most beautiful and often-imi-

tated types of his day. From Fust, Schoeffer developed a shrewd business aptitude, teaching him to take calculated risks and financially benefit from the skills and tools he possessed. With the combination of these traits, Peter Schoeffer was able to assume a role of leadership as he formed what we know as the printing industry. By the time of his death in 1503, Schoeffer had left his mark with over 250 publications issued from his press.

A majority of this number represents work directed toward the Church and the universities. Schoeffer made a profitable business of printing bibles, missals, psalters and theology books. He often reprinted the same books twenty years later after he had sold all the original copies. With his background in law, books around that subject form the second largest genre of his work.

And as is typical with printers today, he found a great market in the printing of political broadsides, regardless of which side of the fence the clients sat. In 1462, there was a rival for the archbishopric of Mainz (a very powerful position) between Adolf von Nassau and Diether von Isenburg. Schoeffer was in business for a profit and saw no problem with printing broadsides for both of them!

Schoeffer's career represents numerous significant accomplishments: the first printed and dated colophon in 1457 as well as the first printer's mark; the first multi-color printing; the first transitional type away from dark blackletter towards a humanistic and readable letter in 1462; the first use of Greek type in 1465; the first printed books on law and science; the first title page; the first "newspaper" with the printing of information about the coronation of the Emperor Maximilian in 1486.

In the 15th century, the printer had to master all of the aspects of his trade, from typesetting to printing to bookselling. Without the later, all the beautiful printing in the world would still amount to bankruptcy! Peter Schoeffer was exceptionally skilled in this area, accomplishing more to the establishment of a bookselling trade than any of his contemporaries. He was the first to bring books up the river to Frankfurt for the annual fair, a tradition that quickly became the Frankfurt Book Fair which still occurs each year.

In 1466, Schoeffer printed a broadside list of the books he had for sale, set in the beautiful 1457 Psalter type and containing a paragraph or two of



*The double-crest emblem of Fust & Schoeffer, the first printer's mark found in the colophon of the 1457 Psalter.*

standard sales hyperbole regarding the beauty and distinction of his books. At the bottom of the surviving copy of this printed list is the handwritten name of the bookseller, mentioning he could be found at the Wild Man's Inn (probably the location of a good tavern, if I understand the printing trade!). The booksellers would load up a wagon with books and travel from city to city, lodging at an important inn in town and hoping for a response to the advertising circulated throughout the city. The price for the books varied greatly, fluctuating according to what the market would bear or the client wanted to pay. The famous Catholicon originally sold for 41 guilders but was remaindered ten years later for 82% less!

Peter Schoeffer was well rewarded for his toils. By the end of his life, he had enjoyed great public recognition for his achievements. He also amassed a significant fortune that gave him a very comfortable life. Schoeffer also enjoyed the pleasure of knowing he had accomplished all he desired in life, with skill and distinction, and that his life was a fitting tribute to the Master he served faithfully. Three of his four sons continued on as printers and the House of Schoeffer stretched well into the 16th century. Though his name is not immortal as Johann Gutenberg's, Peter Schoeffer will be remembered as a great father to our trade. As printers today, there is much we can learn from his story.

And if Peter was kicking today, you'd better believe he would have understood the importance of supporting The International Printing Museum by sending a tax deductible, year-end contribution to the Printing Museum Foundation! It's really a basic concept: either give it to a great charity or the Emperor Maximilian will take it! Do it today!

# *Gutenberg's Printing Press to be Unveiled in New Display at the Museum's Annual Open House Celebration Set for Saturday, January 29th, 2000, 10 am. to 4 pm.*

Johann Gutenberg will be celebrated as the "Man of the Millenium" at the Int'l Printing Museum's annual Printing Week Open House. Festivities will begin at 10 am and last until 4 pm at the Museum located at 315 Torrance Blvd. in the city of Carson, one half mile east of the 110 Freeway.

Beginning with *Life Magazine's* article on the most important inventions and people of the last 1,000 years, Gutenberg has received universal acclaim as the Man of the Millenium for his development of movable metal type, the printing press and the industry of graphic communication. The discoveries, advances and influence of the others listed behind Gutenberg on the *Life Magazine* list are dependent upon the fruit of Gutenberg's labors and ideas. Printing has indeed proved itself to be the "Art Preservative of All Arts."

The Printing Museum's new exhibit on Gutenberg will be unveiled at the Open House, featuring a full-size representation of Gutenberg's Printing Press from 1440. Gutenberg himself (in the person of Ernie Lindner) will be on hand to welcome visitors and print pages of his beautiful

Gutenberg Bible. Peter Schoeffer (aka curator Mark Barbour) will be demonstrating Gutenberg's method of hand casting type from a hand mold, creating special keepsake pieces of type as souvenirs for visitors.

Throughout the day, Museum docents will be giving special tours and demonstrations in the Museum galleries, including papermaking and bookbinding.

Refreshments and a barbeque lunch will be available for a small donation.

This special, annual event is designed for your entire family to enjoy the wonders of printing and learn of its importance to our world.

Tickets are \$5 person or \$20 per family (4-8 people). To order and reserve your tickets, call the Printing Museum at (714) 529-1832, or mail a check to PO Box 6449, Buena Park, CA 90622.

**SPECIAL OFFER:** Become a Friend of the Printing Museum for \$25/year donation, and you can receive one free ticket or the family pass for \$10. You'll receive lots of benefits for your membership, and your support will help the Museum!

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## **MISSION STATEMENT OF THE FOUNDATION**

The mission of the International Printing Museum Foundation is to preserve the history of printing and its related arts through the collection and display of the tools, machinery and artifacts of the graphic arts, and to use the collections and resources of the International Printing Museum for the purpose of education, demonstrating printing's vital link between the development of Western civilization and the freedoms we enjoy.

It is the vision of the Foundation to develop and maintain in downtown Los Angeles one of the world's most comprehensive collections and displays of antique printing machinery, and to impact students and visitors throughout Southern California and from across the nation through tours and educational programs.

## **THE WAYZGOOSE GAZETTE**

is issued regularly for the Friends of the International Printing Museum, founded in 1988 by David Jacobson and featuring the Ernest A. Lindner Collection of Antique Printing Machinery.

The term "wayzgoose" dates back to the 17th century and refers to a traditional printers' celebration.

Membership into the Friends begins at \$25 annually and goes to support the programs of the Museum. To become a Friend, simply send a check to the Printing Museum. As a public charity, contributions to the Printing Museum are deductible to the extent allowed by law.

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**Museum hours: Saturdays 10 am to 4 pm**

**or by appointment during the week.**

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