



# THE KEMBLE OCCASIONAL

No. 4

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

JANUARY 1968

## History of 'The Union Printer' of San Francisco

### BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF OCTAVIUS A. DEARING

¶ OCTAVIUS A. DEARING, who developed the "California" typecase, was born in East Buxton, York County, Maine, on September 28, 1840. On August 30, 1862, he enlisted in Company E, First Regiment of Maine Cavalry Volunteers, for service in the Civil War. On his enlistment papers he described himself as a "printer." He developed varicose veins in both legs and was sent to the Harewood Hospital, in Washington, D.C. From there he was discharged, on December 21, 1862, for "total disability for military service."

He found employment as a printer in Boston until 1869, when he came to San Francisco. The story of his stay in San Francisco was told in No. 3, March 1967, of this *Occasional*.

In his application to the Bureau of Pensions for a veteran's pension, Dearing stated he had moved to Portland, Oregon, in 1895. He went there as manager of the Portland branch of the American Type Founders Company, which company had taken over the business of Palmer & Rey, San Francisco type founders, with whom Dearing had been associated for many years.

Dearing's next move was to Corvallis, Oregon, where he became associated with the *Gazette-Times* of that city in 1903. He is listed on the masthead of that newspaper as "Business Manager and Editor" from November 13, 1903, to June 21, 1904.

It appears that ill-health may have prompted him to apply for a veteran's pension, which he did in October 1904, and to enter the Old Soldiers' Home, at Roseburg, Oregon. There he died of septicemia on December 14, 1907, at the age of 67 years.

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¶ ALTHOUGH there was an organization of composing-room employees of the San Francisco newspapers in 1851, called the Pacific Typographical Society, which acted as the bargaining agent with the newspaper proprietors,<sup>1</sup> it was not until August 14, 1872, that San Francisco Typographical Union, No. 21, received its charter from the International Typographical Union. This organization has successfully survived the passing years and today is a vital part of the printing industry in San Francisco.

In August 1888, Volume I, Number 1, of *The Union Printer*, "Official Organ of San Francisco Typographical Union, No. 21," appeared. This was a four-page leaflet, measuring 6" by 8". Displayed on the first page was the statement that the Union met on the "last Sunday in each month at 2 P.M. at Shiels Building, 32 O'Farrell St." Various announcements concerning Union activities made up the second page, while on the third was a list of book and job offices that "have agreed to employ hereafter none but Union printers" and a list of Union daily newspapers. Because of the view they give of the printing business in San Francisco at the time they are reprinted here in full:

#### UNION BOOK AND JOB OFFICES

Bancroft Co., The	45 First St.
Barry, Jas. H.	429 Montgomery St.
Brown, W. C.	419 Sacramento St.
Brodie, J. R. & Co.	401-403 Sansome St.
Bushnell Bros.	608 Market St.
Brunt & Co.	518 Clay St.
Bosqui Printing Co.	Clay and Leidesdorff Sts.
Clack, Wm. & Co.	509 Hayes St.
Crocker, H. S. & Co.	215 Bush St.
Cubery & Co.	415 Market St.
Dougherty, P. E. & Co.	411 Clay St.
Eastman, Frank & Co.	509 Clay St.
Francis, Valentine & Co.	517 Clay St.
Henderson, J. & Co.	419 Sacramento St.
Hicks-Judd Co., The	23 First St.
Hughes, E. C.	511 Sansome St.

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Hinton, Wm. M. & Co.	536 Clay St.
Leary, A. J.	404 Sansome St.
Murdock, C. A. & Co.	532 Clay St.
Nevin, C. W. & Co.	532 Commercial St.
Quane, J. F.	404 Clementina St.
Raveley, S. W.	518 Clay St.
Rosenthal & Roesch	419 Sacramento St.
Shine, D. J.	535 Clay St.
Spaulding, Geo. & Co.	414 Clay St.
Stanley, D. S. & Co.	543 Clay St.
Sterett, B. F.	532 Clay St.
Thomas Printing Co.	505 Clay St.
Winterburn, Jos. & Co.	417 Clay St.
Woodward, W. A. & Co.	522 California St.

UNION DAILY NEWSPAPERS

OFFICE	EMPLOYEES	CHAIRMAN OF CHAPEL
<i>Alta</i>	40	Al. Pennington
<i>Bulletin</i>	43	G. W. Alberti
<i>Call</i>	83	J. J. Kerlin
<i>Chronicle</i>	84	Harry Rogers
<i>Examiner</i>	97	C. E. Backess
<i>Journal of Commerce</i>	10	P. J. Haskins
<i>Post</i>	26	H. E. Bennett
<i>Report</i>	25	J. J. Donnelly

The first list shows clearly how the printing offices of the city were concentrated at that time in lower Clay Street. The second discloses the comparative size and importance of the San Francisco newspapers.

One additional issue of *The Union Printer*, September 1888, was produced in the same size. With the issue for October 1888, Vol. I, No. 3, this was increased to 10" by 13 1/2", but remained at four pages. Commenting on "Our Enlarged Edition," the editor, who was not named, wrote: "While the main object of the publication of *The Printer* is to promote the interest of the craft in general, it will be our purpose to make it a representative journal for all branches of the printing business, and interesting and readable to the public in general, which work we will endeavor to accomplish without transgressing upon the territory claimed by any other publication."

Possibly the most interesting feature of this third issue is the listing of the names of all the members of the Union, the officers, and members of the committees.

The officers were:

- Andrew F. Smith, President
- W. W. Shannon, First Vice-President
- Charles Mansfield, Second Vice-President
- Thos. P. Baker, Secretary
- W. B. Benoist, Walking Delegate
- James P. Orwell, Treasurer
- W. A. Simpson, Sergeant-at-Arms

The committees were designated as Executive, Cemetery, State of Trade, Membership, and Delegates to the Federated Trades. "Active

Members" were listed by chapels as follows:

<i>Alta</i> Chapel	44
<i>Bulletin</i> Chapel	43
<i>Call</i> Chapel	81
<i>Chronicle</i> Chapel	83
<i>Examiner</i> Chapel	90
<i>Post</i> Chapel	23
<i>Report</i> Chapel	25
( <i>The Journal of Commerce</i> Chapel with ten members, given in the August list, is not included.)	389
Book and Job Offices (not classified)	265
Total Active Members	654
Exempt Members	67
Honorary Members	24
Apprentice Members	15
Initiated	34
Suspended	22
Expelled	1
Rejected	1
Total persons named	818

On the fourth page is a half-page advertisement by Palmer & Rey, "Type Founders and Press Manufacturers," featuring their "California Reliable" treadle-driven job press. The prices quoted "complete with Throw-off and Ink Fountain, without extra charge (Delivered on board cars or in San Francisco)" were: Size inside chase, 8" x 12", \$175; 10" x 15", \$260; 14" x 20", \$400; Steam Fixtures, \$15. "Three Chases, Wrenches, Roller Mold, Brayer and two sets of Roller Stocks will be furnished with each press."

Almost two columns of the four on page one were filled with reminiscences of older members of the craft. The heading read: "Old-Time Prints. Reminiscences of the Argonauts of the Typographical Craft. It is the purpose of *The Union Printer* to publish in its columns such contributions of fact touching the craft as may prove of interest not only to 'old-timers' but to all who follow the Art Preservative. To this end contributions from interior as well as metropolitan printers are invited. Any favors in this direction will be valued and will promptly appear." Contributions from L. F. Beckwith and Al. Murphy followed this paragraph. Beckwith at this time was a member of the *Call* Chapel, and "Al. Murphy" was probably J. A. Murphy of the *Report* Chapel. Both men had arrived in San Francisco at the height of the Gold Rush.

Reminiscences from "old-timers" were a pleasant feature of *The Union Printer* as long as it was published. Many of the craftsmen who had come to California before 1855 were still living and most of them were still working at their trade. Consequently many of the contributions have historic value and all are of interest. It is probable that future issues of the *Occasional* will draw from this store of rich materials.

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THE KEMBLE OCCASIONAL  
 Issued now and then from the  
 EDWARD C. KEMBLE COLLECTIONS  
 ON  
 AMERICAN PRINTING & PUBLISHING

GEORGE L. HARDING—Honorary Curator  
 MISS ANNETTE WINDELE—Asst. Curator

CALIFORNIA  
 HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
 2090 Jackson Street—San Francisco  
 94109

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As time passed, *The Union Printer* carried more and more news of craft union activities outside San Francisco. Soon its columns carried the rosters of the officers of all the typographical unions on the Pacific Coast. Apparently the paper also became an attractive advertising medium and the amount of advertising in its columns increased.

Two items in the editorial column in the issue for December 1889, Vol. II, No. 5, are worthy of note. The first was the news that "a telephone (No. 1612) has been placed in the Union's rooms." The second was a discussion of the *Printer's* circulation: "It has a constituency of local advertising patronage which it is known has reaped much benefit from investment in the *Printer's* ad. columns. It would be remarkable if its advertisements did not draw some patronage from 5,000 and upward of the readers who peruse eagerly every number that reaches them. In addition to every member of the Union organization—about 900—it is sent to and read by members of kindred crafts—pressmen, stereotypers, bookbinders, type-casters—some 500 more; also to the officers and members of over fifty trade and labor Unions, with a united roll of 8,000 members. Every employer, foreman and workman in Coast town and city scan it for news of local progress, and the many notices the *Printer* receives from the press throughout the Coast, from Puget Sound to Arizona, warrants the belief that no journal of its kind is more continuously and thoroughly read."

The seventh issue of Volume II, February 1890, bore a new name: *Pacific Union Printer*. As explained in an editorial: "The prefix 'Paci-

fic' to the title of the *Union Printer* is made with this number in order to avoid confusion with other journals of like nature and title published in the East. Besides, its large circulation and the large scope of territory that it dominates makes it proper that it be designated as the *Pacific Union Printer*."

With the August 1890 issue, Vol. III, No. 1, the *Pacific Union Printer* was enlarged to eight pages, and it continued in that size until the end.

The end came with the completion of Volume X. The first indication in the columns of the *Printer* that something was brewing is a paragraph in the March 1898 issue (Vol. X, No. 8) reporting the February 1898 meeting of the Union, in which the Executive Committee recommended "that the *Pacific Union Printer* remain in its present form until the close of the present volume, which ends with the July number."

From the minutes of a special Union meeting held on Sunday, March 20, it appears certain the membership was in the mood to demand the nine-hour workday. How the situation developed is not clear from the columns of the *Printer* only. A Strike Committee came into being, and a statement "To the Public" was prepared. Bearing the date June 3, 1898, a Special Issue of the *Printer* appeared with the headlines: "The Printers' War. Conflict Continued With Unabated Vigor on the Part of the Unions."

The issue of the *Printer* for July 1898, Vol. X, No. 12, was the last. The strike continued.

Charles A. Murdock, for many years a leading employing printer in San Francisco, in his last years wrote for *The Pacific Printer and Publisher*, a trade journal published in San Francisco, a series of short articles that appeared monthly under the title "The History of Printing in San Francisco." At the time of the printers' strike of 1898, Murdock was president of the Typotheta, the organization of employing printers. His remarks regarding the printers' strike for the nine-hour workday are pertinent:

"In 1898 came the strike for nine hours. It was a trying time. Everybody favored it, but we were having about all we could do to keep running. Especially we felt we could not afford to be dictated to, so we let our men go. I remember very well shaking each man by the hand, wishing him well, as they went out. It was a good-natured strike. As head of the employers I sought to discourage all rancor and animosity. It was not of long duration. The men gave in, and then we called for a conference. We told the union leaders that we were in sympathy with their ambition. We thought the workday was too long and that eventually

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printers should get better pay, but that it was not easy to accomplish and we must be helped in the process. We proposed to them that the reduction of an hour a day should be by degrees. That after six months (enabling us to meet existing contracts) we would voluntarily lessen the workday a quarter of an hour, repeating the reduction every six months until nine hours were reached.

"The offer was accepted, and we lived through it. Then some of our members clamored for a longer day and tried for it. Then the union men won, as they deserved to. Some of our members showed their faith in a shorter day before it arrived. James H. Barry served notice that his workday would be nine hours, with no pay reduction. The reduction to eight hours was reached through national agreement some time later. The Saturday half holiday followed in due time. . . ."<sup>2</sup>

The only known complete file of the *Pacific Union Printer* is that which was kept in the office of the Secretary of San Francisco Typographical Union, No. 21. Another file, said to be complete also, has been reported from time to time, supposedly owned by a retired newspaper pressman; but all efforts to locate it have been fruitless.

A few California libraries possess scattered issues of the paper. The largest file of these known to the *Occasional* is in the California State Library in Sacramento. This has all issues of Volume III, August 1890-July 1891, and one copy each for June 1892 and October 1896.

At its meeting on June 13, 1967, the Executive Committee of the Typographical Union recommended that the Union's file of the *Pacific Union Printer* be lent to the Edward C. Kemble Collections on American Printing and Publishing, with the understanding that "all members would have access to the bound volumes and they could be used by students."

This recommendation was approved by the San Francisco Typographical Union, No. 21, at its next meeting, and the transfer of this valuable and probably unique file, rich in Pacific Coast typographical history, was soon made to the Kemble Collections in the library of the California Historical Society. All this was accomplished through the cooperation and good offices of Gregor M. Bachich, Secretary-Treasurer of San Francisco Typographical Union, No. 21.

## NOTES.

1. See San Francisco *Alta California*, October 28, 1851 and *Pacific Union Printer*, July 1890.
2. *Pacific Printer and Publisher*, November 1925, p. 341.

## Stop-Press Addendum

The "copy" for the above "story" had gone to the printer when, from a friend of the Kemble Collections who is himself a collector of materials of typographic interest, the mail brought the news that he owned an issue of *The Pacific Union Printer*, Vol. XII, No. 5, consisting of 16 pages, plus a 4-page cover, and bearing the date of December 1899.

There are such people!

It develops the page size of this issue was reduced to 5 $\frac{7}{8}$ " by 9 $\frac{1}{16}$ ", the editor was named as Will J. French, that it bore the imprint of "F. H. Abbott, 314-316 Battery St., San Francisco," and that the back cover carries a 1/2-page advertisement of that shop. The issues of the first ten volumes carry no imprint but it is known they were printed by C. A. Murdock & Co.

A hurried checking about has located no other issues after Vol. X, No. 12, July 1898. Here our story ends until and unless other, later issues of *The Pacific Union Printer* make their appearance.

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## DEARING STORY

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE)

In San Francisco, on January 11, 1882, Dearing was married to Miss Cordelia Murphy by Judge Frank M. Clough. To this marriage a daughter, Dorothy Marian Dearing, was born in Portland on June 29, 1896. Mrs. Dearing, after remaining in Portland a short time, removed to Santa Clara County, California, where she had lived before her marriage. She died there on July 16, 1932.

Dearing described himself, in his pension application dated October 18, 1904, as "Height-5 feet, 11 inches; weight-160 lbs.; color of eyes-hazel; color of hair-brown & gray; complexion-light."

The information contained in this sketch has been gleaned, chiefly, from Pension File WX-667601, in the National Archives, General Services Administration, Washington, D.C.

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