



American Wood Type, 1828-1900: Notes on the Evolution of Decorated and Large Types

Rob Roy Kelly

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The first and most authoritative history of wood type in the United States. This book tells the complete story of wood type, beginning with the history of wood as a printing material, the development of decorated letters and large letters, and the invention of machinery for mass-producing wood letters. The 19th-century heyday of wood type is explored in great detail, including all aspects of design, manufacture, and marketing, and the evolution of styles. Many related trades interacted with wood type production; the book examines the influence of lithography, letterpress, metal-plate and wood engraving, sign painting and calligraphy, poster printing, and type-founding. Long out of print, the book is still regarded by scholars and designers as an invaluable resource for a rich legacy of typographic art. More than 600 specimens of wood type are classified and annotated, as are more than 100 specimens of complete fonts.

Rob Roy Kelly established professional graphic design programs at the Minneapolis College of Art, the Kansas City Art Institute, and Arizona State University. He also served on the faculty of Carnegie Mellon University and Rochester Institute of Technology. In 1989 he received the first Master Teacher Award given by the Graphic Design Educators Association. In 2001, a web site titled Everything is a Work in Progress was developed by graduate students at Rochester Institute of Technology to present Kelly's collected writings on graphic design education. He died in 2004, and his obituary in The New York Times noted that his "influential book on 19th-century American wood type prompted a major typographical revival in the 1970's."

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