

W. A. Dwiggins: A Life in Design
by Bruce Kennett

Front matter and excerpt from Chapter 8.

The complete book is 496 pages, trim size 9 x 11 inches,
1200 illustrations, published by Letterform Archive, 2018.



Like to design type.

Like to jiggle type around and see what comes out.

Like to design ornament. . . .

Like paper.

Like ink on paper.

Like bright colors.

Handicapped by clock and calendar. . . .

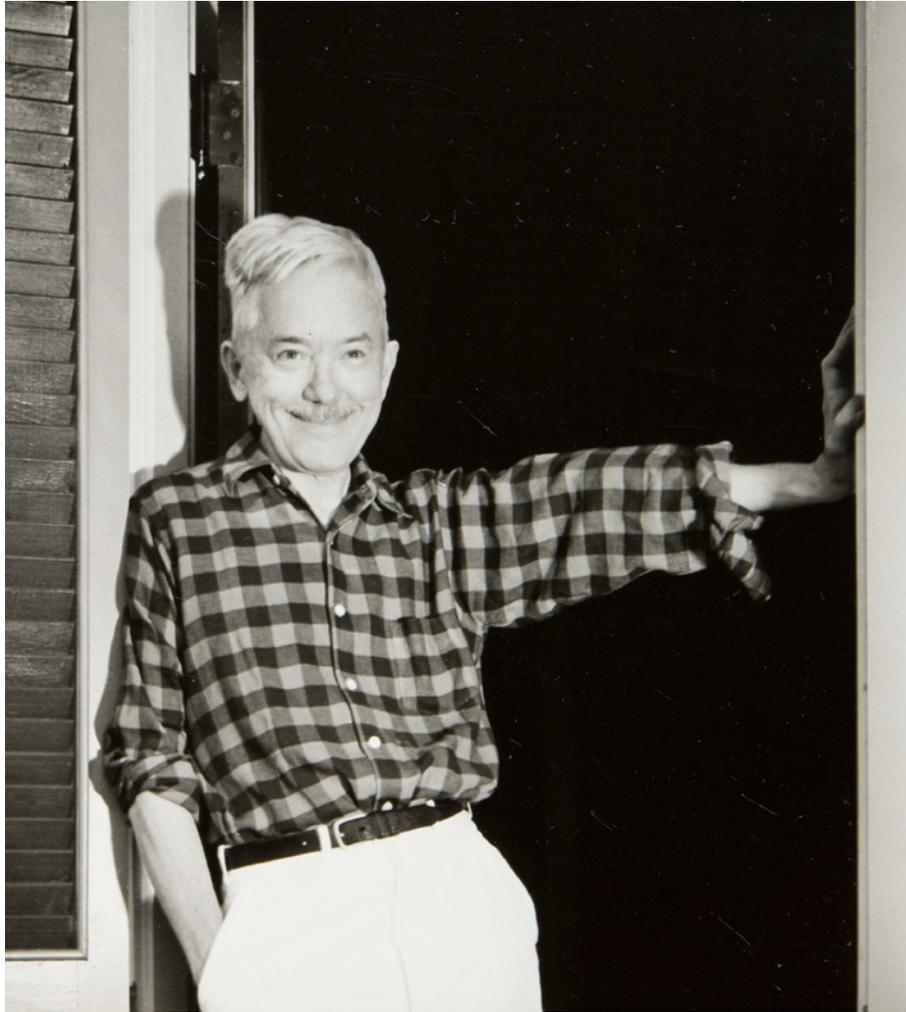
Twenty-four hour day not long enough.

Must work for a reform in time system now used.

Campaign against time only form of crusading.

Otherwise not much of a partisan or evangelist.

— WAD



W. A. Dwiggins



Written and designed by
BRUCE KENNETT



LETTERFORM ARCHIVE PUBLICATION NUMBER ONE



ABOVE Stencil decoration, c. 1928. [BPL] PREVIOUS PAGES Frontispiece photograph by Robert Yarnall Richie, 1941. [LA] The stencil decoration on the title page has been adapted by the author from original artwork made by Dwiggins for the cover of a publication to be issued by the Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University; Dwiggins made the design in 1929 but it was never used. [BPL]

COVERS The portrait of Dwiggins on the front of the standard edition was made by his assistant, Dorothy Abbe, around 1953. [BPL] The portrait of the Dwiggins marionette on the back cover of the standard edition was made by Randall Abbott in the late 1930s or early 1940s. [BPL] The decorated papers on the deluxe edition are a reproduction of the stencil artwork created by Dwiggins for the front and back covers of Edgar Allan Poe's *Tales* (Chicago: The Lakeside Press, 1930). The spine artwork is by the calligrapher and type designer Richard Lipton and the author. Lipton hand-lettered the written matter, and at the author's request deliberately broke the word *Dwiggins* in an unconventional manner as a nod to Dwiggins's own practice. (Dwiggins believed, and rightfully so, that the reader should not have to cock his or her head to read spines on a bookshelf, and thus made his spine titles horizontal rather than ranging them vertically. To make this approach work visually, he hyphenated without restraint — and often in decidedly unexpected places.) Bruce Kennett chose some Dwiggins ornaments from the binding of Margaret Ernst's *In a Word* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1939) and redrew them in india ink. Thus the spine of this biography is a pure analogue production, in celebration of Dwiggins's own techniques for the hundreds he created entirely by hand for Knopf, the Limited Editions Club, Crosby Gaige, Random House, and other publishing clients.

ENDPAPERS A covey of hand-lettered Dwiggins spines, selected from the author's collection. Photos by the author. [BK]

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Founded in 2015, Letterform Archive is a nonprofit center for inspiration, education, and community, with more than 40,000 items spanning 2,000 years of history. The work of W. A. Dwiggins, including hundreds of rare and original objects, is a highlight of the collection. This book is therefore a fitting debut of the Archive's publications program, which draws from a unique collection to tell untold stories in lettering, typography, calligraphy, and graphic design.



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FOREWORD



Ralph Morris, a friend of Dwiggins since their childhood, made this portrait in 1933. A large print of the image — perhaps WAD’s favorite likeness — enjoyed a prominent place in the design studio at 45 Irving Street. [BPL]

BEFORE MEETING the book-jacket designer Louise Fili, now my wife of more than thirty years, I had never heard the name of nor seen any work by William Addison Dwiggins (Dwig, WAD, Bill). I had no idea that he (or anyone else, for that matter) coined the term “graphic design” (or “graphic designer”) or that his prolific talent touched every realm of “commercial art.” Nor did I have a clue that he was an erudite designer-critic-satirist. I had totally missed this work, despite what I believed was extensive research into the history of design writing. By the time the Dwiggins light shined on me, I had written about half a dozen important American and European designers and illustrators, among them people who I’m certain knew Dwiggins personally. Nonetheless, I remained shamefully and embarrassedly ignorant. Until redemption came.

Soon I was collecting reams of Dwigginsiana — books, book covers, pamphlets, type specimens, mailing labels, and even some original lettering so seemingly perfect that I couldn’t believe they were his real drawings.

To become truly immersed in his output, I decided to co-curate an exhibition of Dwiggins’s published work. I didn’t have to twist Louise’s arm to collaborate or work hard to convince Laurie Burns to host the show where she was director at what was then the ITC Gallery. And contrary to word on the street, it was even easy to get the blessing of Dwig’s closest confidante, creative associate, and longtime keeper of his flame, Dorothy Abbe.

The first time she met with us, on a beautiful New England fall Saturday in Hingham, Massachusetts, where she lived in the original two-floor studio after Dwiggins died, was itself an unforgettably wonderful moment. I had this unsettling sense of having been there before. Funny thing, too. Maybe, I reasoned, because I used to frequent a rare-book shop in nearby Marshfield, where unwittingly I bought a few of Dwig’s books. I might have passed the Hingham studio without knowing that destiny would someday put me inside. Or maybe I was just hungry from the long trip.

Whatever, that first meeting with Dorothy was incredible. The studio, across the street from the old Colonial at 30 Leavitt Street in which Bill lived with his wife, Mabel, was the citadel of all that was Dwiggins — from his proof press to the hand-built marionette stage. Although it was

clear that Dorothy inhabited the premises, it was still a living monument to Dwig's passions and possessions. Upstairs was the loftlike living quarters, lit in the morning by a grand window; downstairs were his marionette theater (with lighting fixtures that he designed) and chairs arranged for a performance; the print shop; and storage. The entire house was filled with things Dwiggins had made by hand. He had been gone for at least thirty years, but in that building he was alive.

We selected dozens of choice artifacts for the 1986 exhibit, which Dorothy wrapped carefully before we moved them. A month before the opening, on one final preparation trip, we stopped at the Boston Public Library, where Dwiggins's studio had been replicated and most of his marionettes were on display. I realized that as inspiring as these rooms are to this day, there was no better memorial than the studio in all its preserved glory, and that having Dorothy as guide was priceless. It was a great year.

This too is a monumental year, because what you are holding in your hands is the next best thing to being in Dwiggins's presence. This is an amazingly exhaustive biographical narrative and curated collection of rare and remarkable WAD-work. When the publisher Rob Saunders, founder of Letterform Archive, asked me to introduce this volume and showed me the thick presentation dummy, I told him that the best I could muster was a giddy fanboy's praise.

And it's true: Bruce Kennett, Dwiggins researcher par excellence, biographer, and himself a book designer — in fact he designed all the pages in this one — has done exceptional (and essential) work in re-creating a life in design and the design of a life. This text is impressive and fascinating and the detailed selection of images so fine that I couldn't hold myself back from exclaiming "Wow, I never saw that" after every turned page.

This book is many things, but most of all it is proof positive that if there is any doubt about the origin theory of graphic design, Dwiggins did more to promote, diversify, and integrate the graphic, typographic, and printing-arts disciplines than anyone else of his generation. For a guy who was stricken with diabetes and was not supposed to live beyond his forties, during the extra thirty or so years, he did the work of three lifetimes.

Steven Heller



Hard at play in the marionette workshop at 45 Irving Street. Photograph by Robert Yarnall Richie, 1941. [BPL]

INTRODUCTION



Detail (actual size) from a map drawn by Dwiggin for his 1915 moving notice. The motto is from Voltaire's *Candide*. Carl Purington Rollins, University Printer at Yale and a close friend of the artist for more than fifty years, observed that "Dwiggin's garden is his imagination." [BPL]

A SUMPTUOUS GARDEN AWAITS YOU. It stretches from rural Ohio to coastal Massachusetts, but also extends to the farthest provinces of the imagination. As you wander through it, you will see the fruits of a prodigious and creative mind, that of an artist who was modest in his appearance to the outside world but deliciously funny in his work and with his closest friends: a man who infected all around him with a sense of lightness and gaiety.

W. A. Dwiggin grew up in small-town America, a place steeped in the traditions of trust, friendship, hard work, honesty, and integrity. In everything he did — building kites, designing books and types, creating ornament and calligraphy, carving marionettes, writing plays, using humor to create change or to indulge in pure merriment — he combined his intelligence and wit with a deep understanding of raw materials and machinery and a commitment to the highest standards of craftsmanship and quality. Despite frail physical health, he was robustly alive. Working quietly from his simple home and studios, he made meaningful contributions to the culture of his time, and, by extension, to our own.

There are pockets of Dwiggin appreciation everywhere. In the arcane world of type design, although he no longer occupies the central location in the pantheon that he enjoyed half a century ago, he is still revered by many. Book designers know his name and are able to give examples of his accomplishments. Calligraphers have marveled at his work in anthologies of the great lettering artists. In the world of puppetry, he is renowned as a creator of marionettes and respected for his skills in engineering; his counterbalanced construction breathes natural movement into puppets that must, by definition, merely hang from strings. Yet, curiously, although members of each of these communities are familiar with one facet of his work, many are unaware that he was active simultaneously in half a dozen areas of creative endeavor.

As you explore the diversity of his output, what I hope will emerge is the unifying spirit with which Dwiggin approached everything he did. He struggled daily with the challenges of severe diabetes, but there are no visible traces of bitterness or anger; instead, there is the steady presence of

fun. He understood that life is a gift, and even though he had ample reasons for expressing discontent, his only complaint was that the twenty-four-hour day did not provide enough time for him to complete all he wanted to accomplish.

As I have contemplated Dwiggins's creative output over the decades of my career, I have certainly found inspiration for my work as a designer, but mostly I have found pleasure and laughter. Best of all, Dwiggins's view of the world has helped me to know what is most important in my own life. Since 1980, I have presented numerous slide lectures about this amazing artist, so that as many as possible could be introduced to his joyous spirit. This book is the logical extension of these lectures.

The narrative is organized by location: Each of the eleven chapters covers the period Dwiggins spent in a particular location — first his childhood and schooling, then the years he occupied his various studios (what he called his “work-shops”). The great variety of his creative output during every one of these periods makes it especially important to observe all that he was undertaking at the time. With this organization, it is easy to see how one approach to solving a problem might go on to influence his work in a completely different realm. Although his work in type design and marionettes took place amid all the other activities of his life — from his late forties onward — his accomplishments in these two areas are abundant enough to merit greater exposition, and thus I have given each of these its own domain.

Then there are Dwiggins's powers as a writer. Over the years, whenever space in print has been devoted to his creativity, Dwiggins's importance as a graphic artist has invariably led publishers and editors to reproduce his visual work. His writing, however, is as astonishing in its vividness as it is in the validity of the points he argues and in the belly laughs he is capable of evoking. The Writings section brings together a substantial group of his pieces — from fiction and fantasy to social commentary and essays on the graphic arts — for the first time since *Mss. by WAD* was published by the Typophiles, back in 1947.

All of the pieces in the Writings section have been composed in hot metal on the Linotype, using the types



Decoration (actual size) from a brochure for Warren's Olde Style, a laid-finish paper manufactured by longtime Dwiggins client S. D. Warren, c. 1928. (BPL)



Top portion of title-page decoration (slightly reduced) from Sigrid Undset's *The Wild Orchid*, published by Alfred A. Knopf, 1931. [BPL]

Dwiggins designed for that machine, and then printed letterpress: the process for which those types were intended. (What you will see in this book are high-quality photographic reproductions of those letterpress sheets, shot with raking light to preserve all the surface texture of the original printed pages.)

For you, the reader, this may be a first encounter. Or you may be a Dwiggins fan of long standing. For me, this book is the culmination of more than forty years of learning from this inspiring man. What I want most to give you is a loving and extended view of this life so very well lived. Dwiggins is a treasure we all hold in common, and it is time that he become more fully appreciated. It was not his way to seek the spotlight — indeed, he avoided it whenever possible — but I have the feeling that as this book tugs him gently from the wings and out onto the stage, he is quietly pleased.

I HAVE DWELLED for many happy years in the garden of Dwiggins. I first discovered this world in 1972, when my college friend Jeff Heehs and I shared an apartment in Boston; because both of us were interested in printing, we began to spend all our leisure time in the Boston Public Library looking at graphic-arts books. One day Jeff met Dorothy Abbe, who had worked as Dwiggins's assistant during the final years of his life, and Jeff immediately introduced me to her. At that time Dorothy was helping to install the Dwiggins Collection at the BPL and was filling the three display rooms with his books, tools, and marionettes.

Through the years that followed, I had the pleasure of visiting Dorothy again and again at her home — the former Dwiggins studio at 45 Irving Street in Hingham, which had become her residence a few years after his death. A typical visit lasted for many hours and included a potluck meal. I would bring a potato quiche, Dorothy would contribute a salad and a pot of tea, and as I pored over folder after folder of original artwork, savored good food, and listened to Dorothy's stories, I came to understand Dwiggins's gifts in new ways.

Concurrent with these visits, I began to search for as many examples of his work as I could afford to add to my

own collection. Dorothy welcomed my youthful enthusiasm and curiosity and supported my growth in important ways, even keeping up a correspondence with me while I was living abroad. As do many others who hold dear Bill Dwiggin and his legacy, I am profoundly grateful to Dorothy for her devotion to keeping alive the memory of her friend and mentor.

I began this book project in 2003 at the suggestion of Rocky Stinehour, who had been my strong friend and important guiding light since the 1970s. Rocky produced books for some of the great museums, libraries, and scholarly institutions in the United States and beyond. He was considered by many to be the dean of fine-book printers and someone who upheld high standards with quiet dignity and scholarly sensitivity; he also admired Dwiggin and his work. Sadly, Rocky died, in July 2016, before he could see bound copies of this biography, but I was grateful and proud to show him the entire book once I had finished writing it. He guides me still.

To do justice to Dwiggin and his story, I worked on the book steadily for a dozen years between paying jobs and then full time for the past three. In 2014 Rob Saunders, another friend and colleague of forty years, asked if he could join in as publisher, which added yet another layer of affection to the enterprise.

And so, encouraged and aided by many along the way, it is now my pleasure to guide you through this landscape, which was crafted with great care by a cultured man possessed of a warm and whimsical heart, as skilled with words as he was with images and hand tools . . . a man fully in love with life.

Bruce Kennett

As I write this, it is early July, and an hour before dawn. The meadow south of the house is filled with fireflies. In this soft time that brings the promise of day, the fireflies are brilliant, darting here and there, weaving kinetic patterns in all directions. I feel Dwiggin's spirit everywhere.



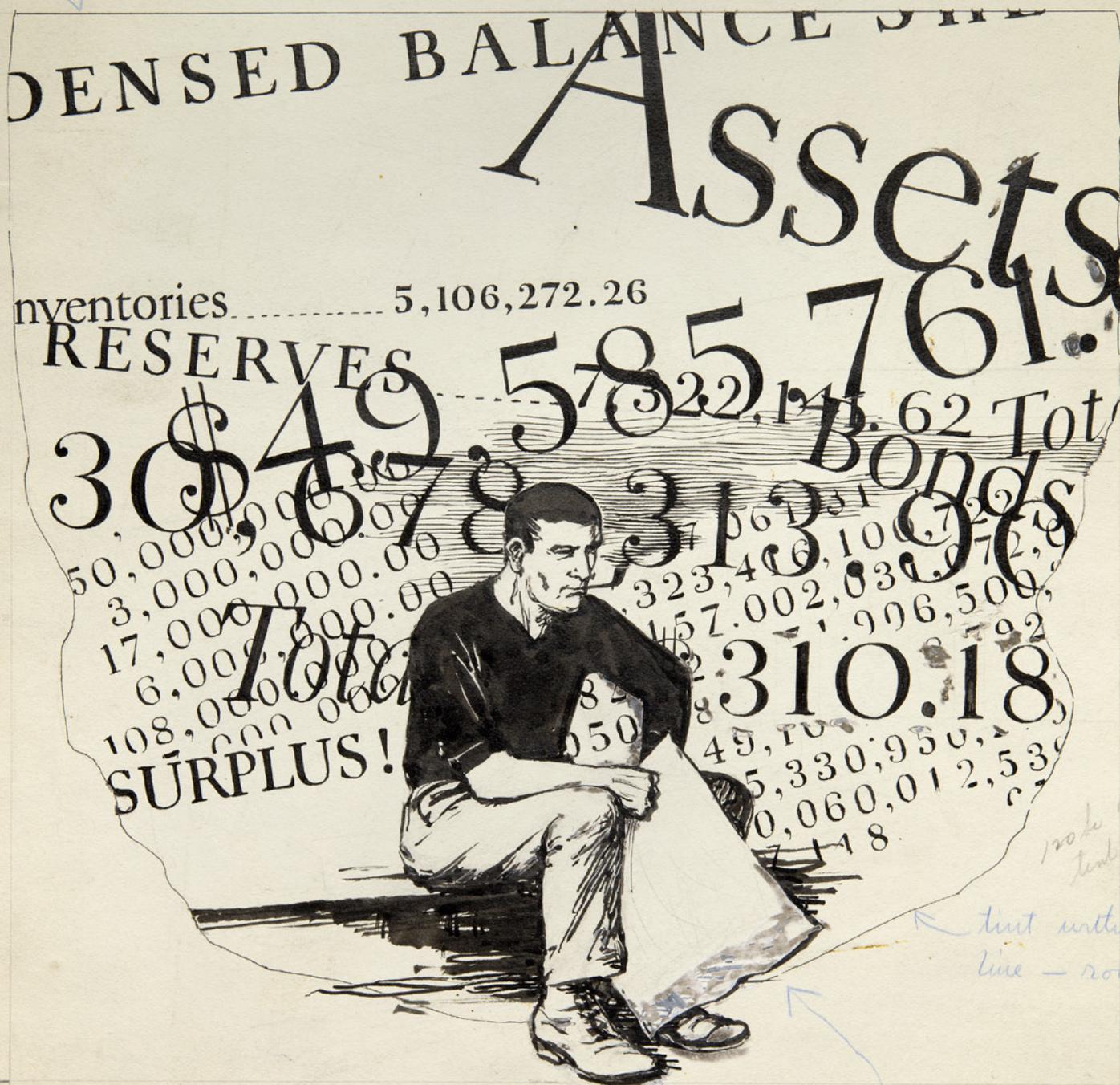
Title-page decoration (actual size) from Robert Nathan's *One More Spring*, published by the Overbrook Press, 1935. [LA]

BILL RYAN

expert mechanic

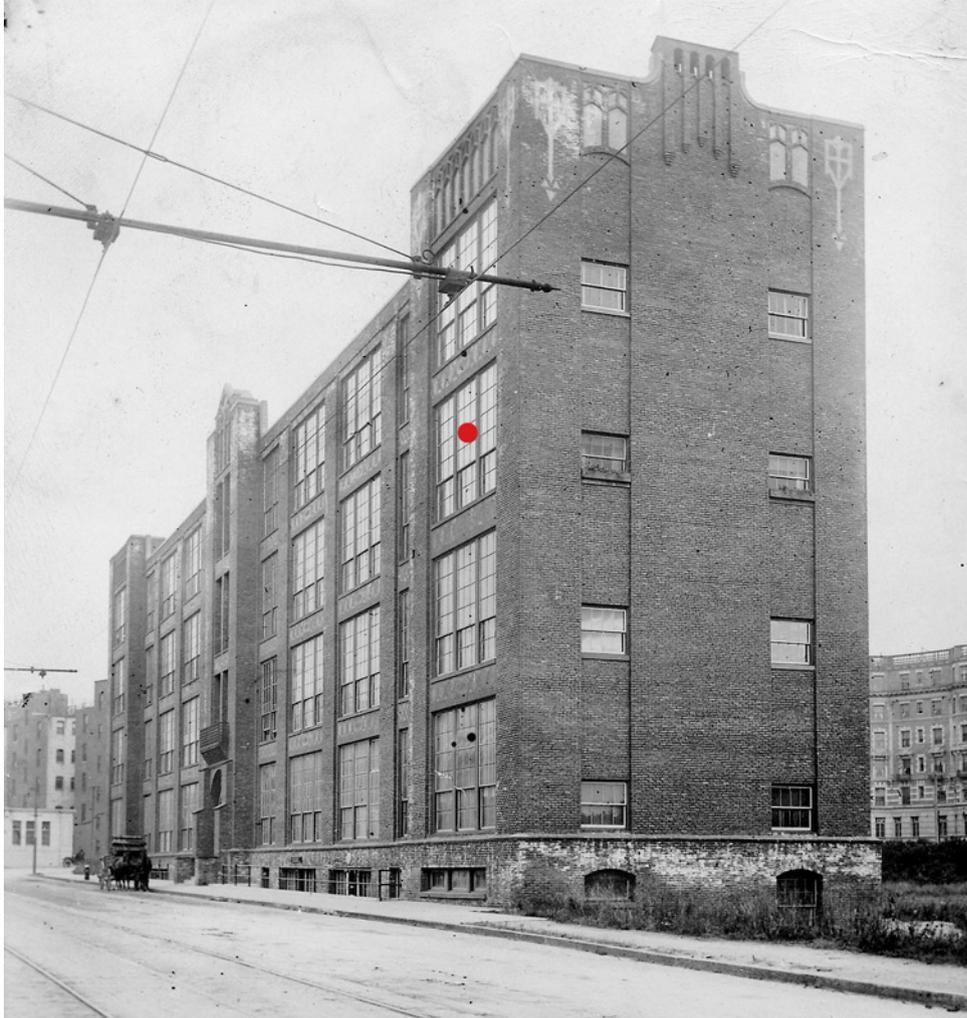
Cogitates

route off line →



5 3/4 in

Spare figure and paper out of tint



Fenway Studios, 30 Ipswich Street, Boston, was purpose-built for artists in 1905 and continues that tradition today. Every studio has north light from windows twelve feet high; the lofty interior spaces were designed to emulate the ateliers of Paris from the previous century. The red dot indicates the location of the Dwiggins-Goss studio. [BPL]

CHAPTER 8



201 FENWAY STUDIOS 1922–1929

*Mr. Dwiggins sits on a high stool and makes dots — but,
from the standpoint of calligraphy, Mr. Dwiggins is paint-
ing a twelve-league canvas with brushes of comet's hair.*

— PAUL M. HOLLISTER



Dwiggins handcrafted many of his own tools. (BPL)

THE STUDIO-MATES basked in the tranquility of their new location. The Fenway Studios building stood tall along the south side of Ipswich Street, facing a wide network of railroad tracks that led to nearby Back Bay Station. With no buildings to the north — nothing but open sky — the immense wall of windows flooded every studio with even lighting throughout the day. In addition, the Museum of Fine Arts and the parkland of the Back Bay Fens were just moments away. Some of Boston's most accomplished and interesting artists kept studios here, where they could work in solitude, eat meals, and spend the night if necessary. Inside these massive walls, the new occupants found a deep sense of peace and a stimulating and colorful assortment of neighbors.

Corner studio 201 also provided the welcoming charm of a fireplace. As they had done at Boylston Street, Dwiggins and Goss divided the space into smaller areas with their wicker furniture and dull black bookcases. First-time visitors generally entered with cries of astonishment: The solid black walls transformed the studio into a stage set, with framed illustrations, murals, and bits of work in progress radiating flashes of color from the void.



A present-day view of 301 Fenway Studios, located directly above 201 and identical to it in layout and fixtures. A press may be seen in the right foreground: The current tenant teaches printmaking at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts. He previously occupied 104, the space where Dwiggins worked from 1929 until 1933. (BK)

Dwiggins worked at a high drawing table, sometimes standing, sometimes sitting on a stool. On the side table at his elbow he kept a phalanx of tools: reed pens, metal nibs, artists brushes, oddly shaped knives, jigs, clamps, and rulers. He invented many of these, and might fabricate a tool to perform only a single specific task.

During these Fenway years, Dwiggins grew ever more involved with stencil-making, and small sheets of celluloid now littered the perimeter of his drawing board and the side table, pocked with triangular cutouts or arrays of tiny holes, smears of dried ink and paint spread across their surfaces. To apply the color through his stencils, Dwiggins bought shaving brushes, sawed off their bristles to obtain exactly the right length and stiffness, and then mixed inks and paints to an ideal viscosity so the color would pass through the stencils without bleeding.

The seven years that Dwiggins spent at 201 Fenway Studios marked a significant change in the nature of his work. While he was a tenant *chez* Bartlett, and also at Lime Street and Boylston Street, he dashed off illustrations and lettering for a handful of advertising agencies and a few publishers and printers, but had never found steady work in book design. Now he was able to realize this dream, which he had held in mind since the days of the Guernsey Shop. By the end of the 1920s, he had also achieved his other goal: to become a designer of printing types. The most telling characteristic of his work at 201, however, is variety.

From his earliest days working with Carl Rech in Cambridge, Dwiggins had kept journals. During the Hingham years, the records were laconic and sparse, reflecting that work was pretty thin on the ground. Through the 'teens, as business improved, the journals demonstrated eloquently just how busy Dwiggins was becoming. Then, after 1925, as the volume of his work increased even more, the records started to capture fewer details of his workdays. By 1929 he had stopped making entries altogether. For anyone interested in the full arc of Dwiggins's career, it is a shame that he did not continue the practice of making daily records, but the journals that do exist provide a marvelous description of his quotidian activities and of the almost impossibly wide range of his interests and skills.

By the time he moved to Fenway Studios, paper companies had risen to the top of Dwiggins's growing client list. S. D. Warren was the most active by far, followed by Strathmore and then Crocker-McElwain, a company that marketed the products of several paper mills. Through *Direct Advertising* publisher Brad Stephens, he undertook scores of projects for other mills and paper brands, such



As part of his emphasis on fun, Dwiggins loved to infuse his work with references to literature and art history. TOP Here he used the Charles Dickens title to make a sample letterhead design for Crane Paper, produced as an insert for *Direct Advertising*, 1924. The watercolor sketches are preserved in one of Dwiggins's scrapbooks. BOTTOM The upper portion of the final printed letterhead. [BPL]

HADRIAN

This lettering was a commission from Carl Rollins. It appeared in red on the cover of a booklet Rollins designed and printed for Worthy Paper Company in 1926. [BK]

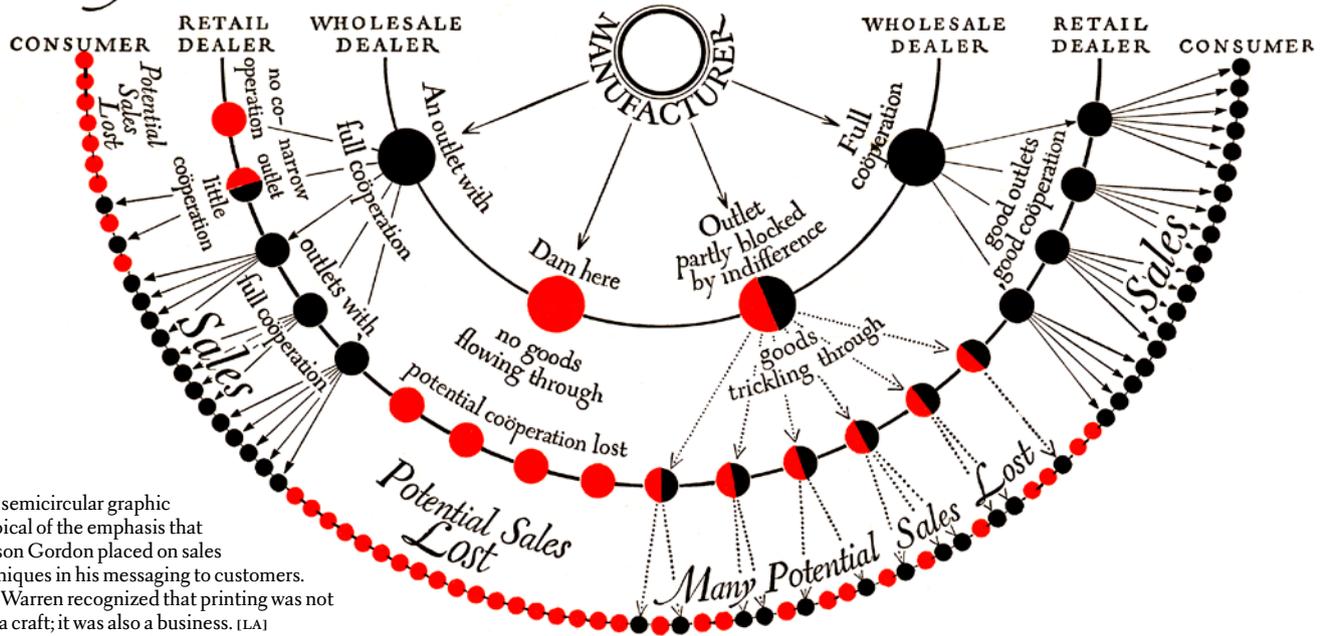


Line art in a loose style, drawn for *Waldek Stanislas wants you to tell him*, a twelve-page S. D. Warren brochure produced by Dwiggin and Gordon in 1923. Pitched to the owners of businesses, the story describes the life and work experiences of Polish immigrant Waldek. The brochure explained that an in-house magazine, however modest, would improve company culture and help employees to understand the purposes and goals of the business. The result would be “less unrest and less labor turnover,” and the owner would “profit accordingly.” And, of course, it would be printed on Warren paper. [BPL]

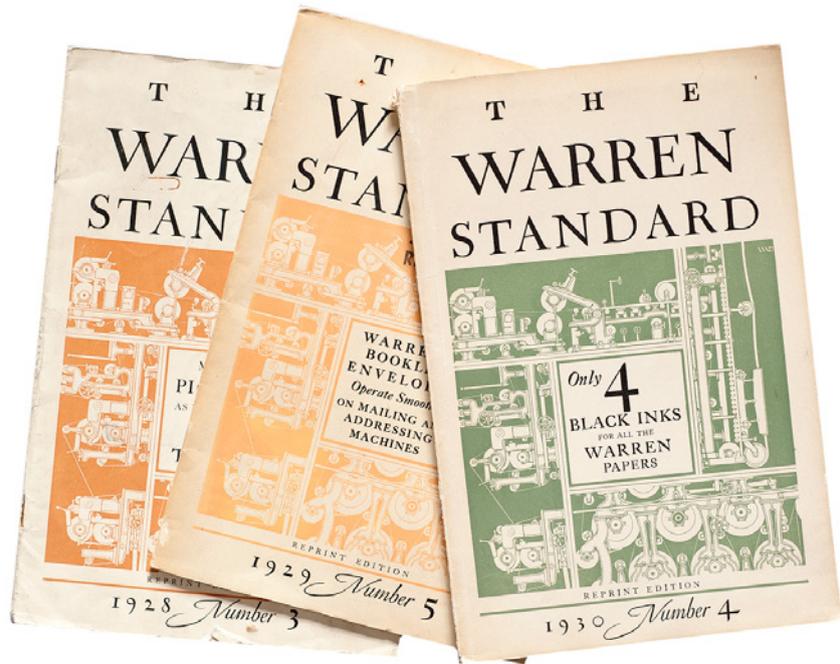
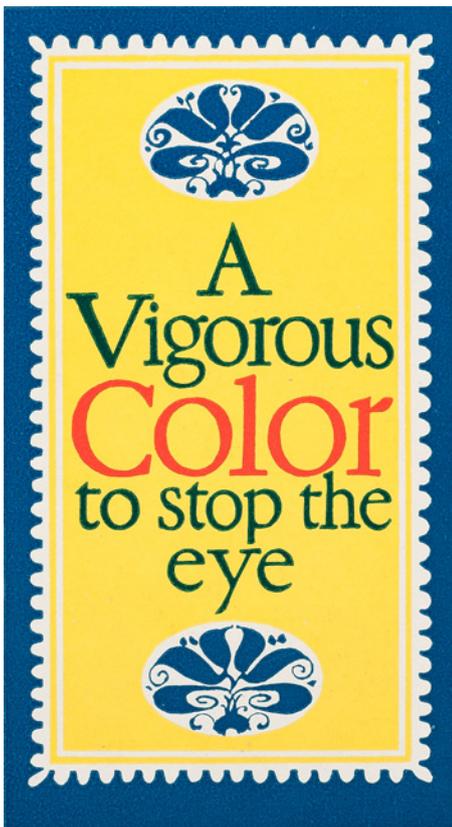
Many of the S. D. Warren jobs involved the transfer of useful information, not just the creation of an ad with a quick visual effect and memorable headline. Dwiggin was a natural teacher and thoroughly enjoyed these assignments, which were developed in partnership with the art director Watson Gordon. In the example above, printers and paper buyers were able to view and evaluate eight approaches for the reprinting of a full-range photograph (one-third of which is revealed to the left of the foldout panel). Warren’s publications sought to raise the level of quality in as many of its customers’ shops as possible, with the desired result that Warren papers would always appear at their best. [SDW]

as Atlantic, Crane, Eastern, Linweave, Morocco Bound, Old Hampshire, and Worthy. Most of this work was the production of inserts to be bound into the quarterly issues of *Direct Advertising*, but Dwiggin also designed sample books and other promotional materials, such as *The Paper Book*, an occasional publication of Crocker-McElwain. In 1923 Dwiggin designed *The Pictorial Life of Benjamin Franklin*, a lavishly produced book that marked the two-hundredth anniversary of Franklin’s arrival in Philadelphia. Brad Stephens wrote detailed captions for the plentiful illustrations, N. C. Wyeth painted a color frontispiece, and the Philadelphia papermakers Dill & Collins underwrote the costs of the project.

Are your wholesalers and retailers Outlets? or Dams?

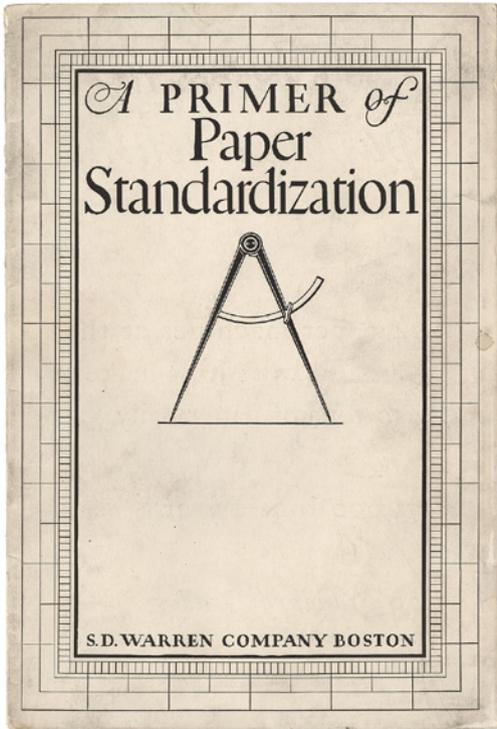


This semicircular graphic is typical of the emphasis that Watson Gordon placed on sales techniques in his messaging to customers. S. D. Warren recognized that printing was not only a craft; it was also a business. [LA]

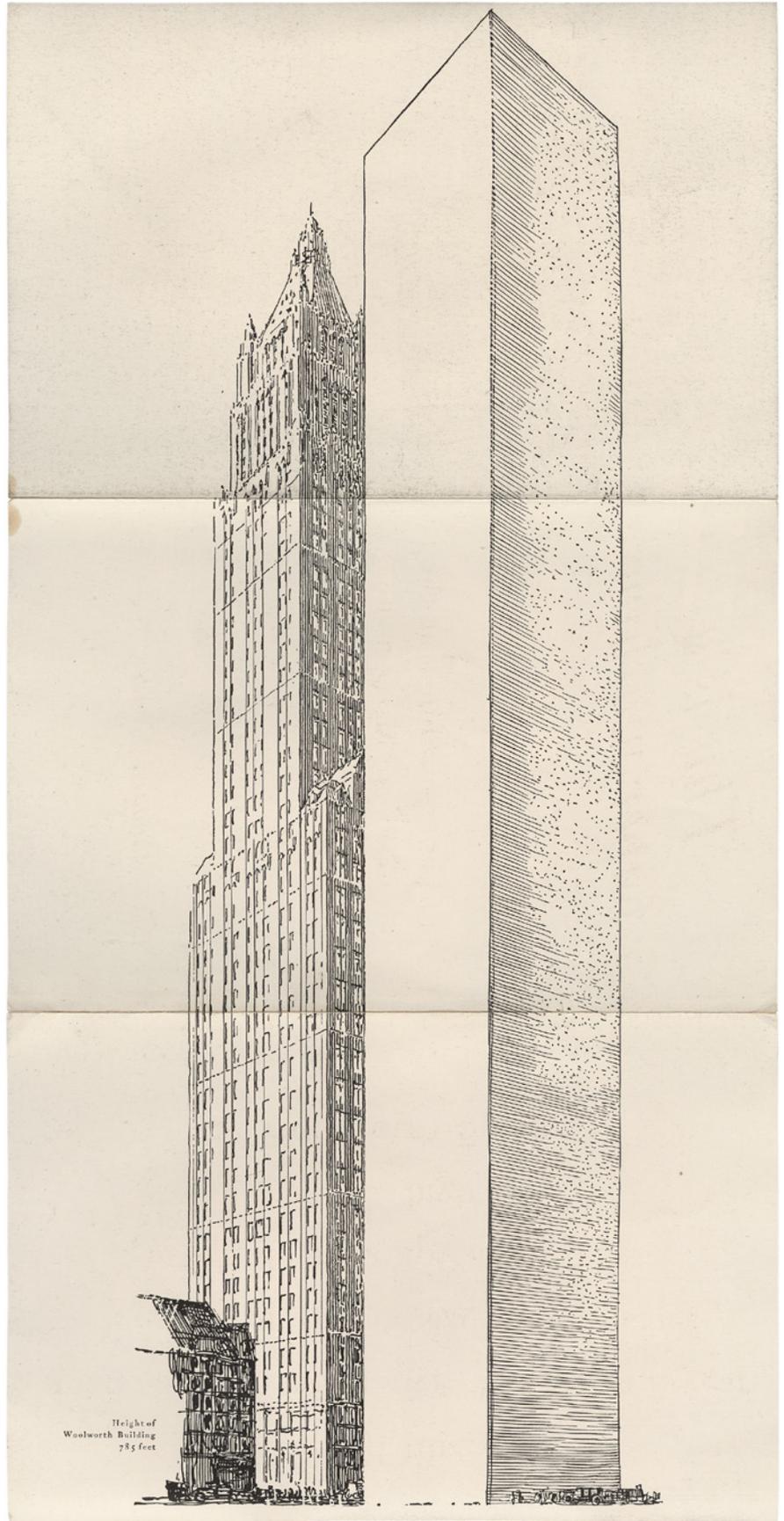


ABOVE *The Warren Standard* delivered technical advice and product news to customers several times a year. Dwiggins drew the fanciful diagram of a paper machine for the cover, which was then printed in a different color for each issue. [SDW]

LEFT The following text accompanied this graphic (actual size) from a 1924 Warren publication: "If [this] vigorous color page were attached to a letter, it could not be easily overlooked in a pile of mail on the desk of a prospect. This, we believe, is a fairly good reason for the use of brilliant color." [SDW]

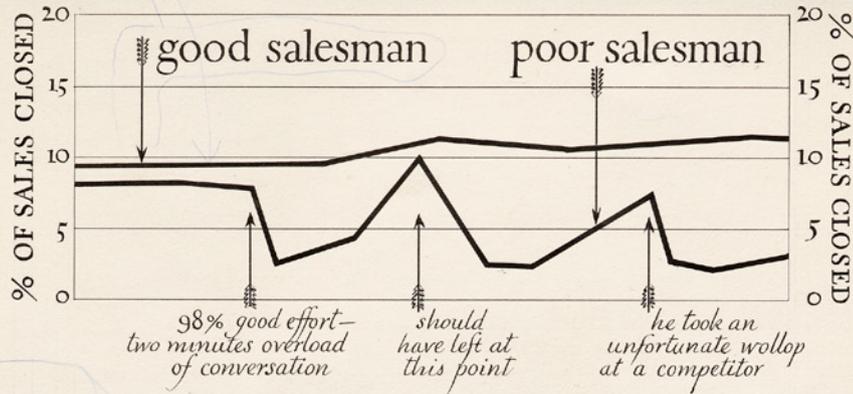


This 1924 publication described the benefits of standardized paper manufacture: less pressroom trouble and greater profits for the printer. ABOVE Front cover. RIGHT Three-panel foldout illustration from the interior. Text on an adjacent page claimed that a year's production of Warren paper, cut into 25 x 38-inch sheets, would make about five hundred piles, each as high as New York City's Woolworth Building. All artwork drawn by Dwiggin. [MUL]



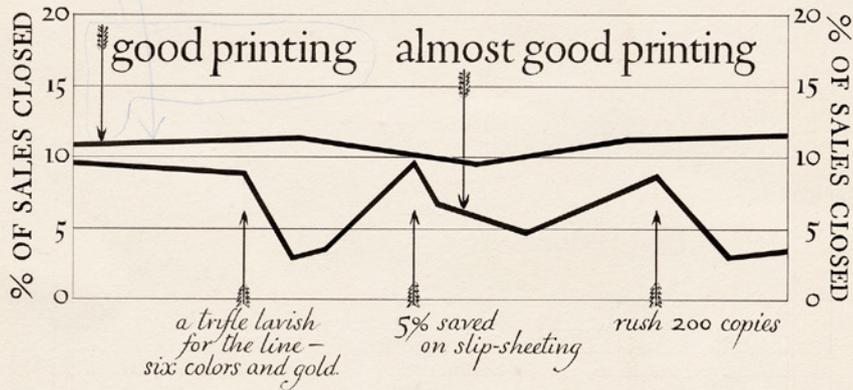


red plate

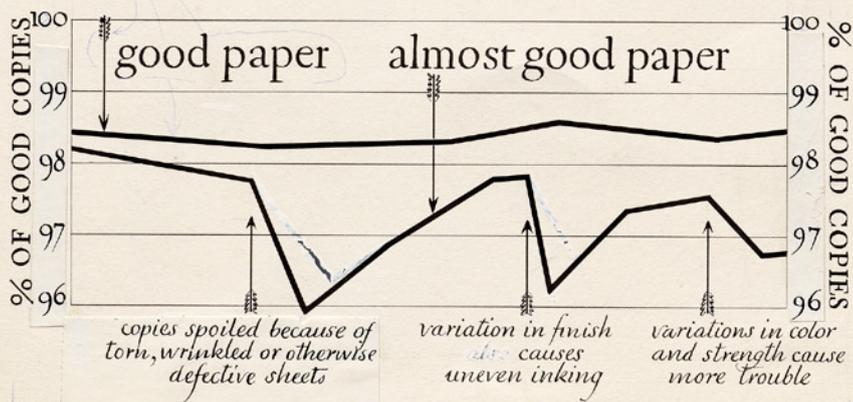


"good salesman" arrow and graph line in red.
rest in black

red plate



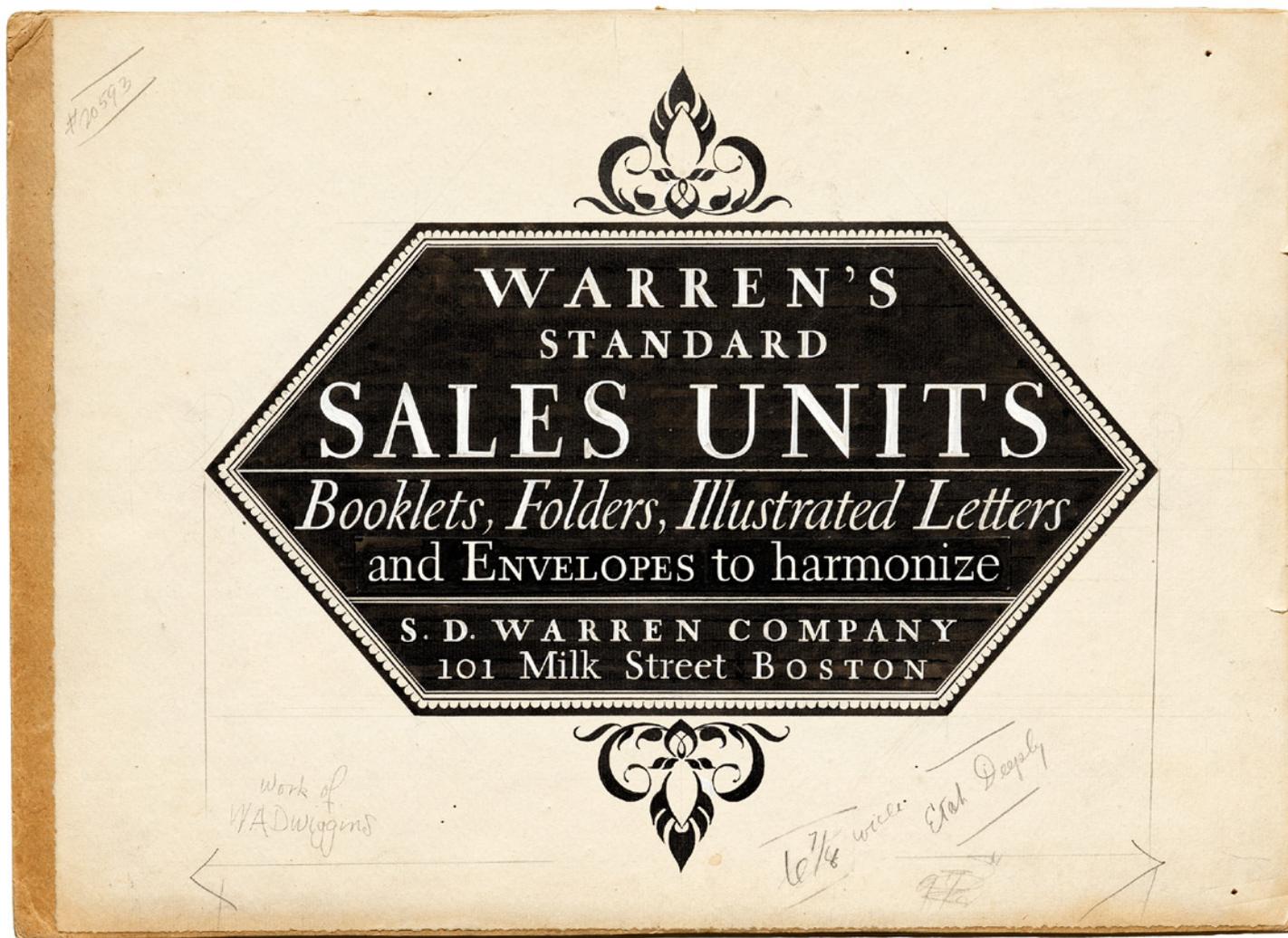
red plate



Note these percentages, they seem about right for spoilage. I can't get the docs. broken for poor paper. I can't without confusing the graph.

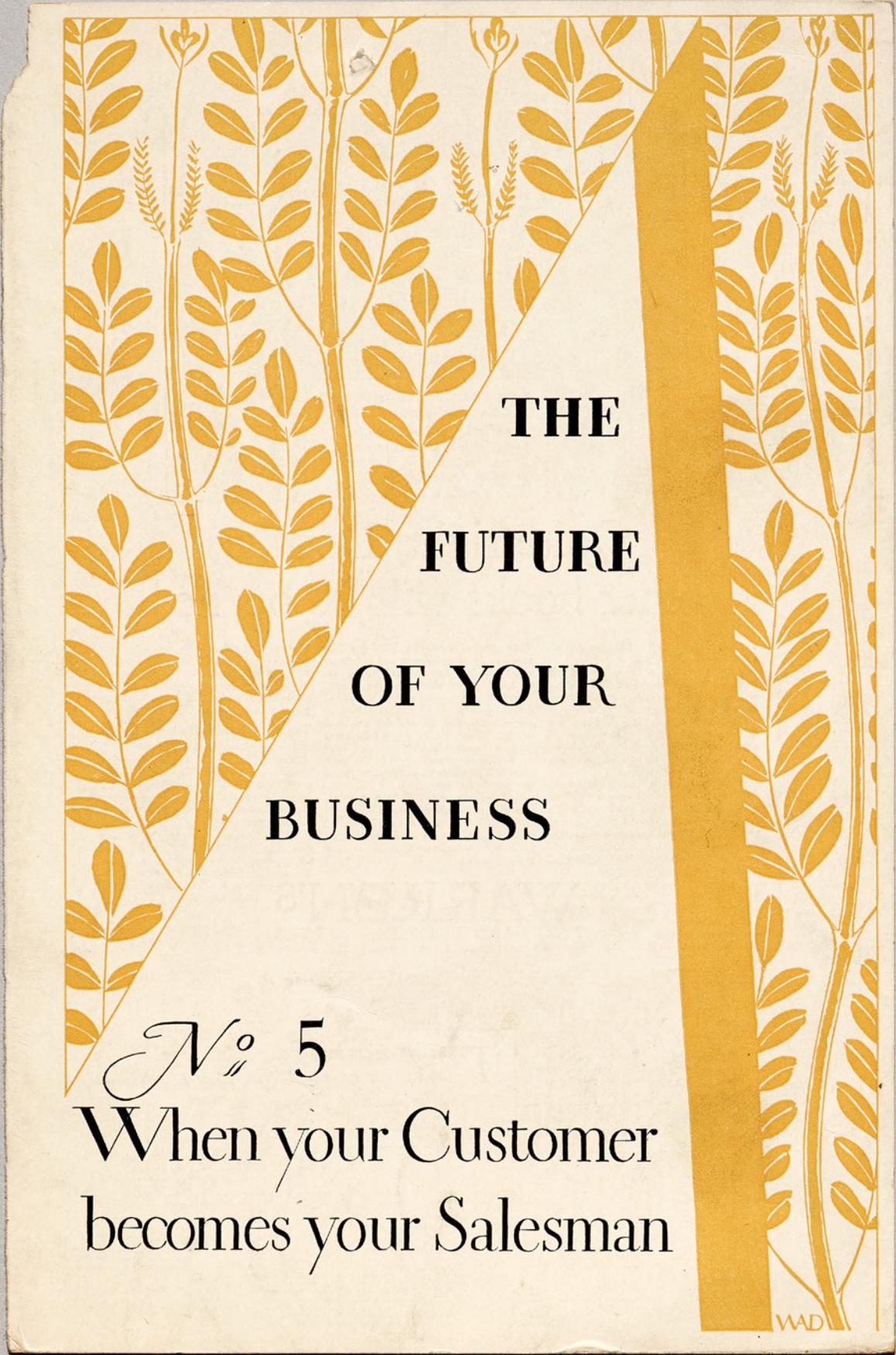
4 1/8 wide - exact

Original artwork for S. D. Warren, 1925. The "good" titles and graph lines printed in red; the remainder printed in black. [LA]



Lettering for S. D. Warren.
ABOVE Original pen-and-ink
artwork, 1925, RIGHT Printed
sales material, 1926. (LA)

THE next twenty-six pages contain
13 WARREN ADVERTISEMENTS that
will appear during the year 1926 in
the SATURDAY EVENING POST, COLLIERS
and the LITERARY DIGEST—
also 13 Predictions about the use
of PRINTING as a part of selling

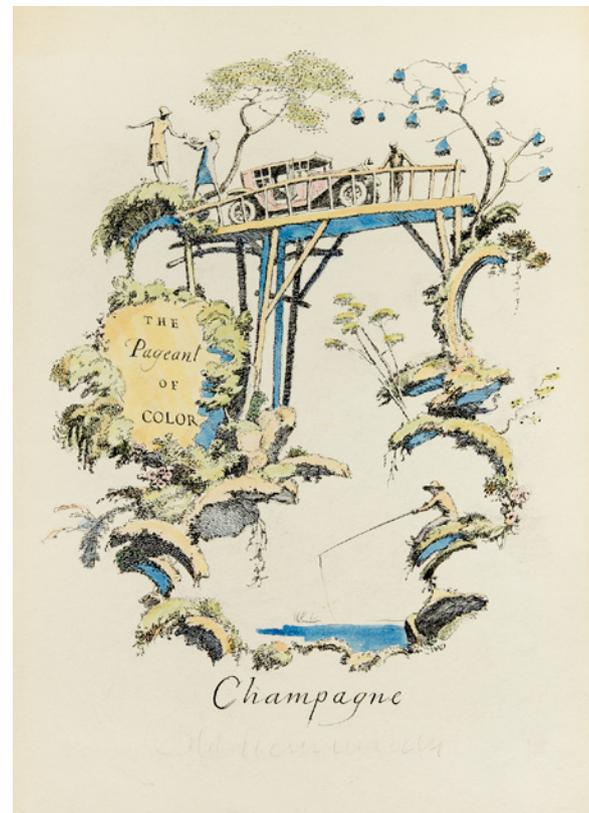
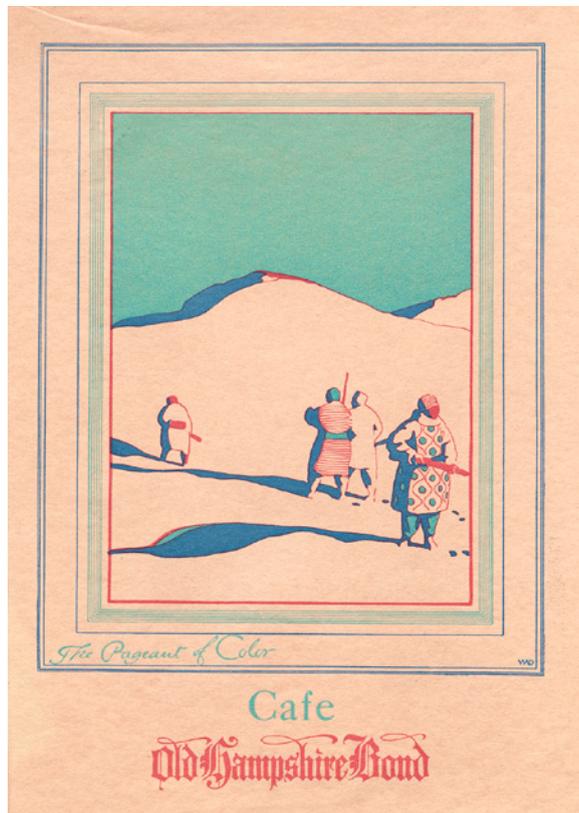
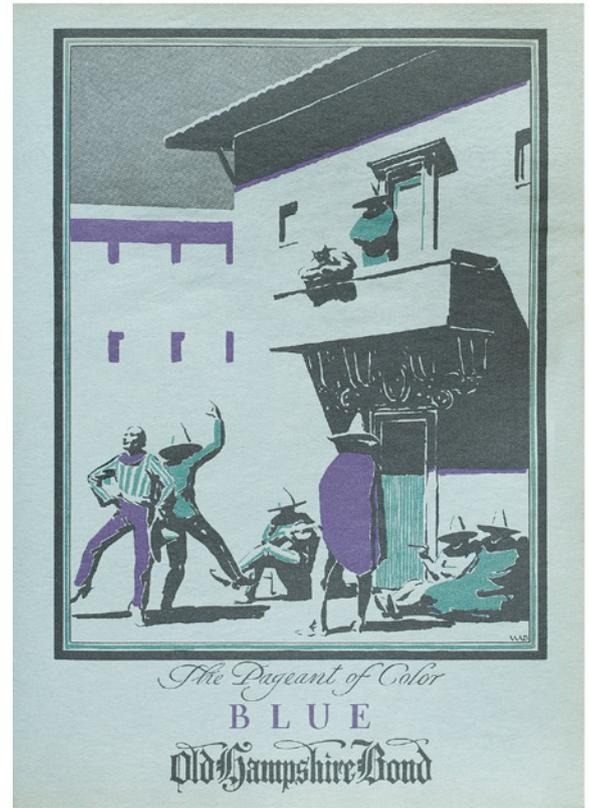
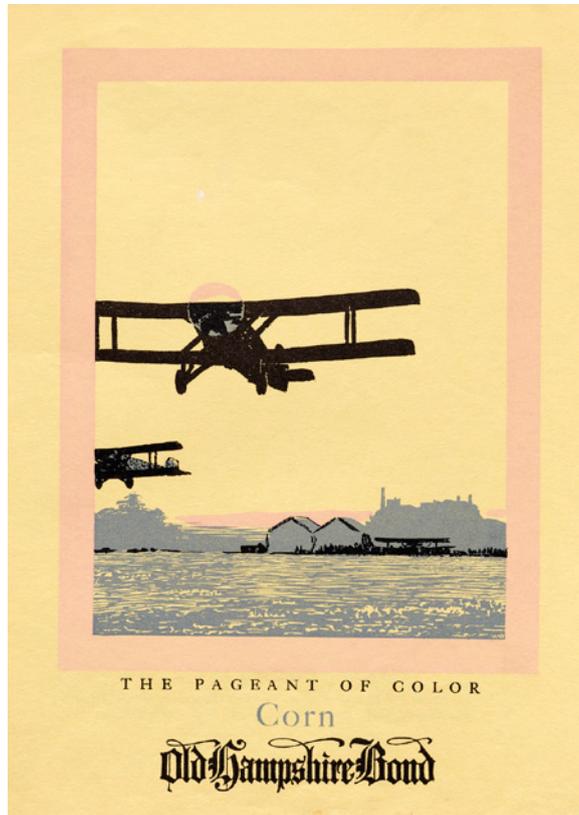


**THE
FUTURE
OF YOUR
BUSINESS**

No 5

When your Customer
becomes your Salesman

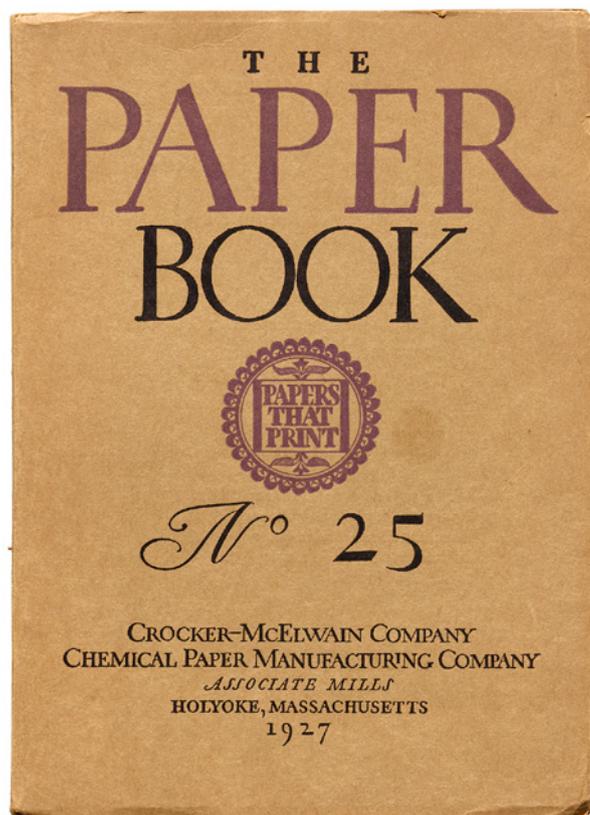
WAD



Dwiggins continued to produce inserts for the Hampshire Paper Company. He particularly enjoyed the opportunity to use unusual combinations of ink colors, printed in solid areas onto the colored surface of the paper. UPPER ROW and LOWER LEFT Inserts from 1923 and 1924, printed and bound into *Direct Advertising*. LOWER RIGHT The Champagne page is Dwiggins's watercolor sketch for a 1925 insert. (LA, BPL)



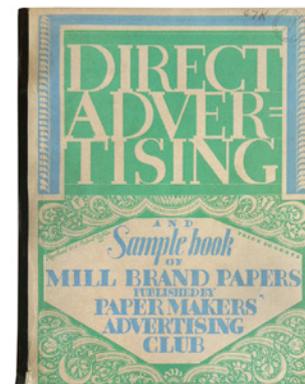
In contrast with Warren's concentration on education and technical support for its customers, Strathmore's key interest was in the use of color. The company adopted Albert Munsell's color system as an integral part of its marketing efforts and hired the finest artists of the day to create memorable samples. In 1923, Dwiggins produced a portfolio (outside panels shown above) that contained four folders, each touting a different Strathmore paper. Dwiggins designed the sample printed on Alexandra Deckle Edge Book (overleaf); the other three folders came from the hands of Carlton Ellinger, R. F. Heinrich, and Oswald Cooper — the latter Dwiggins's friend from their Holme School days, in Chicago. [SA]



Cover for the house organ of Crocker-McElwain, all copy hand-lettered. Dwiggins began with this client in 1918 and received work from it throughout the 1920s. [LA]



In a playful nod to art history, Dwiggins recreated "L'Afficheur," a Bouchardon drawing from 1742. He signed his artwork with only a D, directing major credit to Bouchardon. The scene was singularly apt as an illustration made for Chemical Paper's International Covers insert, *Direct Advertising*, 1924. [BPL]



In the mid-1920s, Dwiggins came up with a dramatically different cover for *Direct Advertising*. This rougher and more exuberant design made its inaugural appearance on the final issue of 1926. During 1927, the new cover alternated with the previous "all-type" cover, but from 1928 on, the publication reverted to the older design, which it used exclusively well into the 1930s. [HCL]



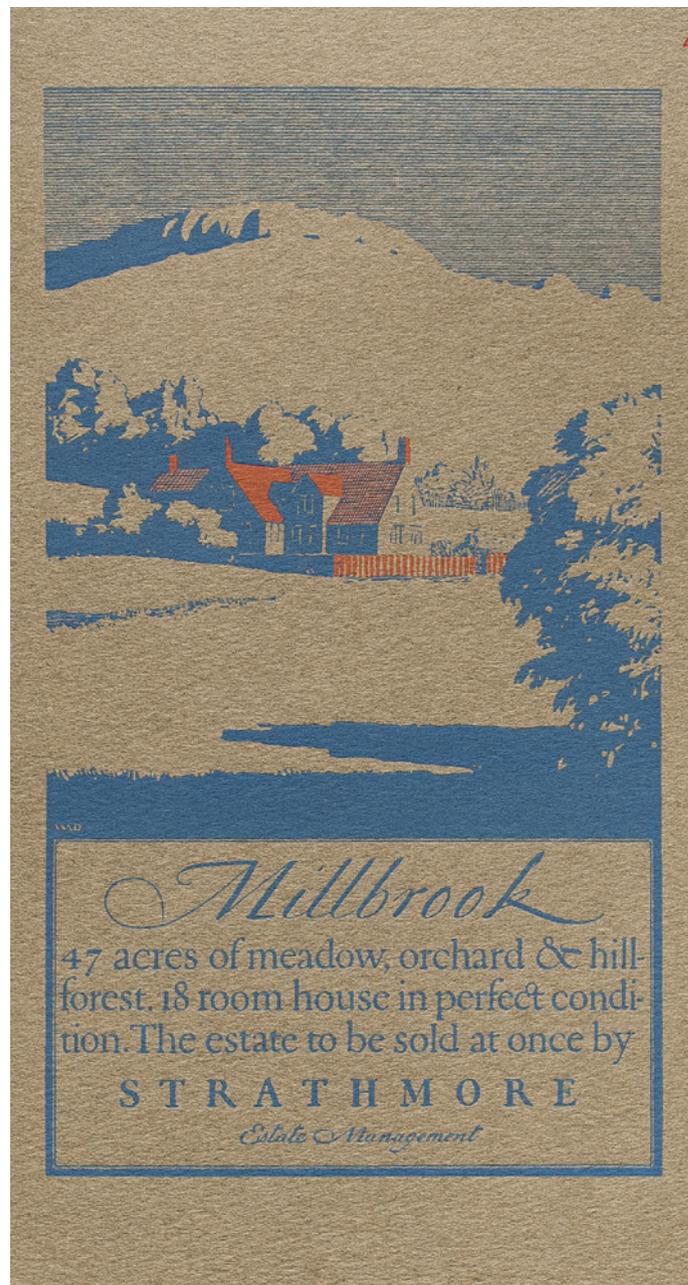
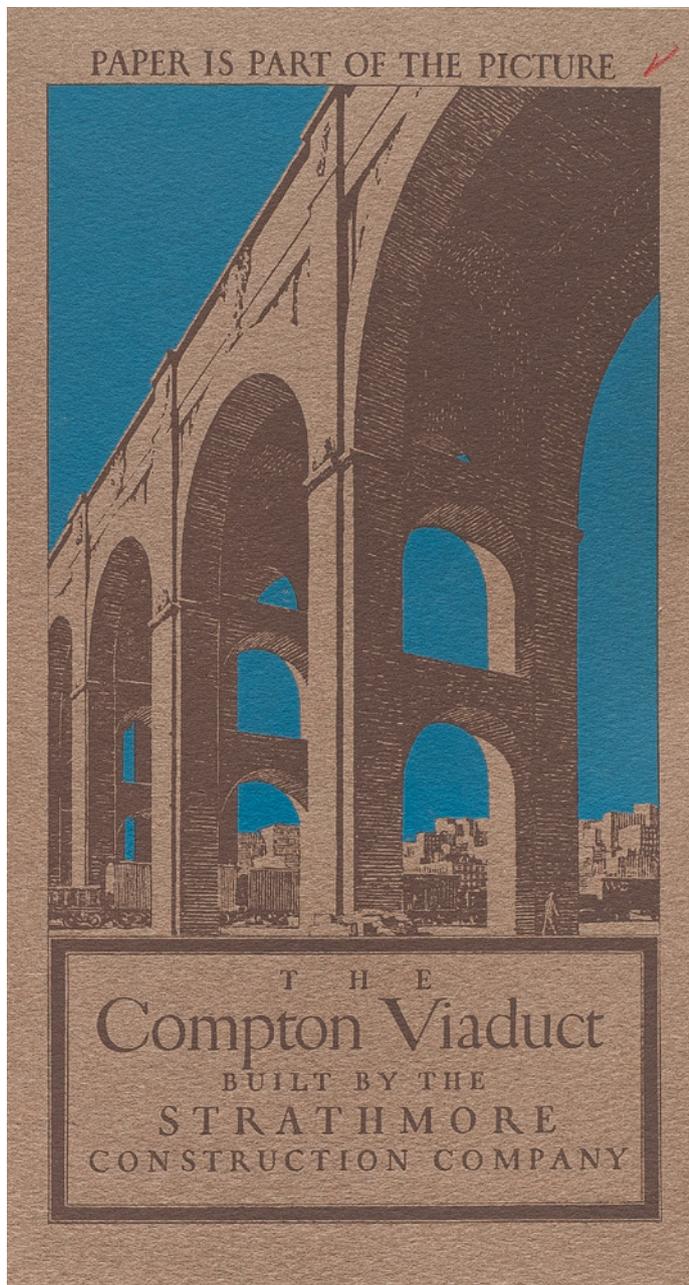
P A P E R I S P A R T

THIS paper represents snow with a whiter white than can be printed. It is part of the picture in this purely mechanical sense. But it is also part of the picture in the greater sense of fitting the subject and aim of the artist. Mr. Dwiggin has imagined a setting at St. Moritz.



O F T H E P I C T U R E

His people are more Ritzy than most. The paper says Quality, too. If you would express the idea of Quality in your printed matter, *be* Quality. The name of this quality paper is *Strathmore* ALEXANDRA BOOK—rather inexpensive as it happens. Investigate.

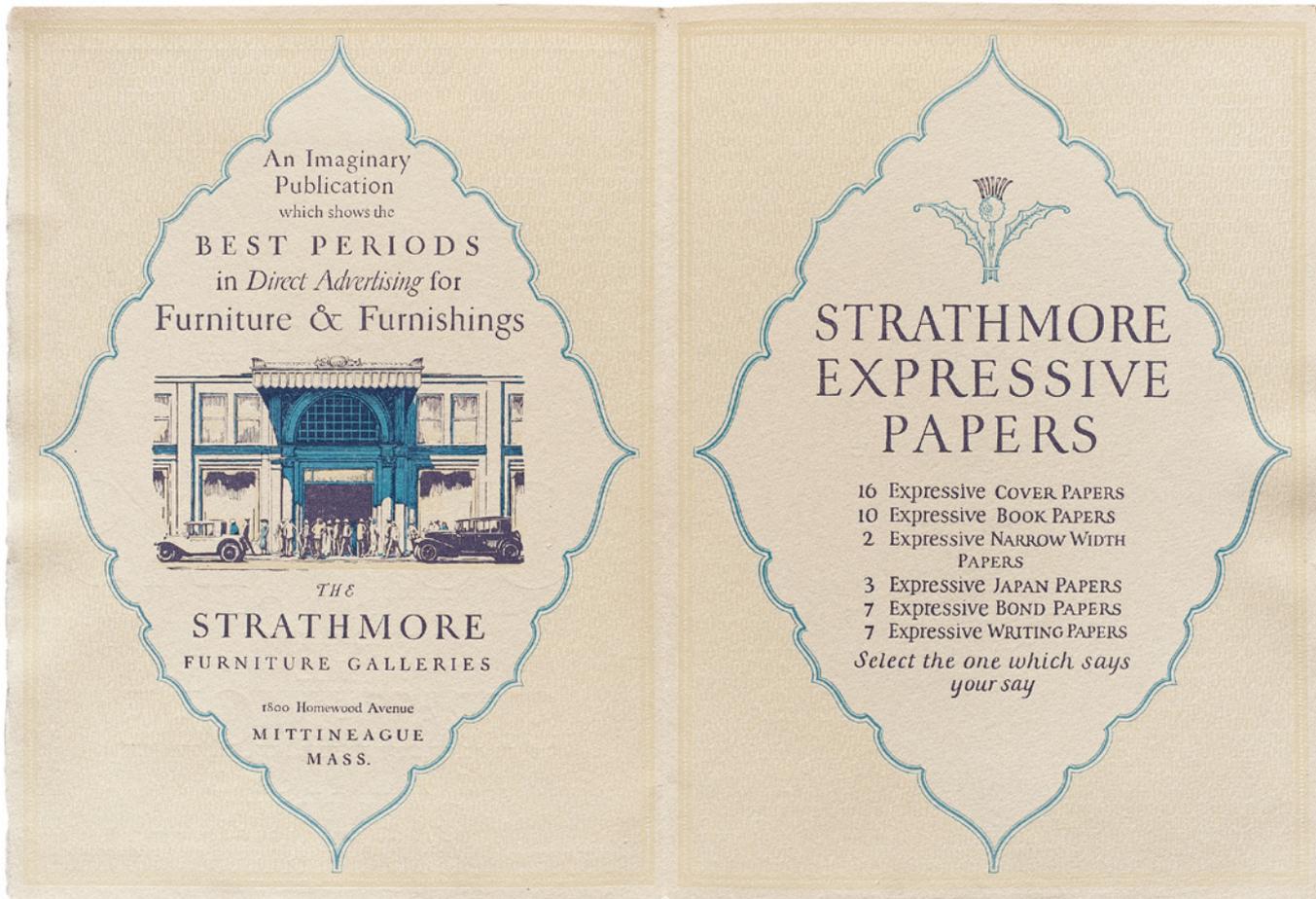


Details (actual size) from two pages of a sample book for Strathmore's Munsell Cover, 1924. All lettering by hand; note the movement in the *k* character in *Millbrook*. [SA1]

RIGHT A Dwiggins drawing (actual size) of the building at 1800 Homewood Avenue in downtown Strathmore, 1923. Strathmore Paper's advertising agency imagined an entire community — "Strathmore Town" — with businesses that would prosper by printing their promotional materials on Strathmore's lovely colored papers. The construction and real-estate companies represented above and the furniture galleries in the folder shown on the facing page were parts of this community.

FAR RIGHT Floral decoration from the front cover of a sample book for Strathmore's Bay Path Imperial paper, 1923. [SA1]

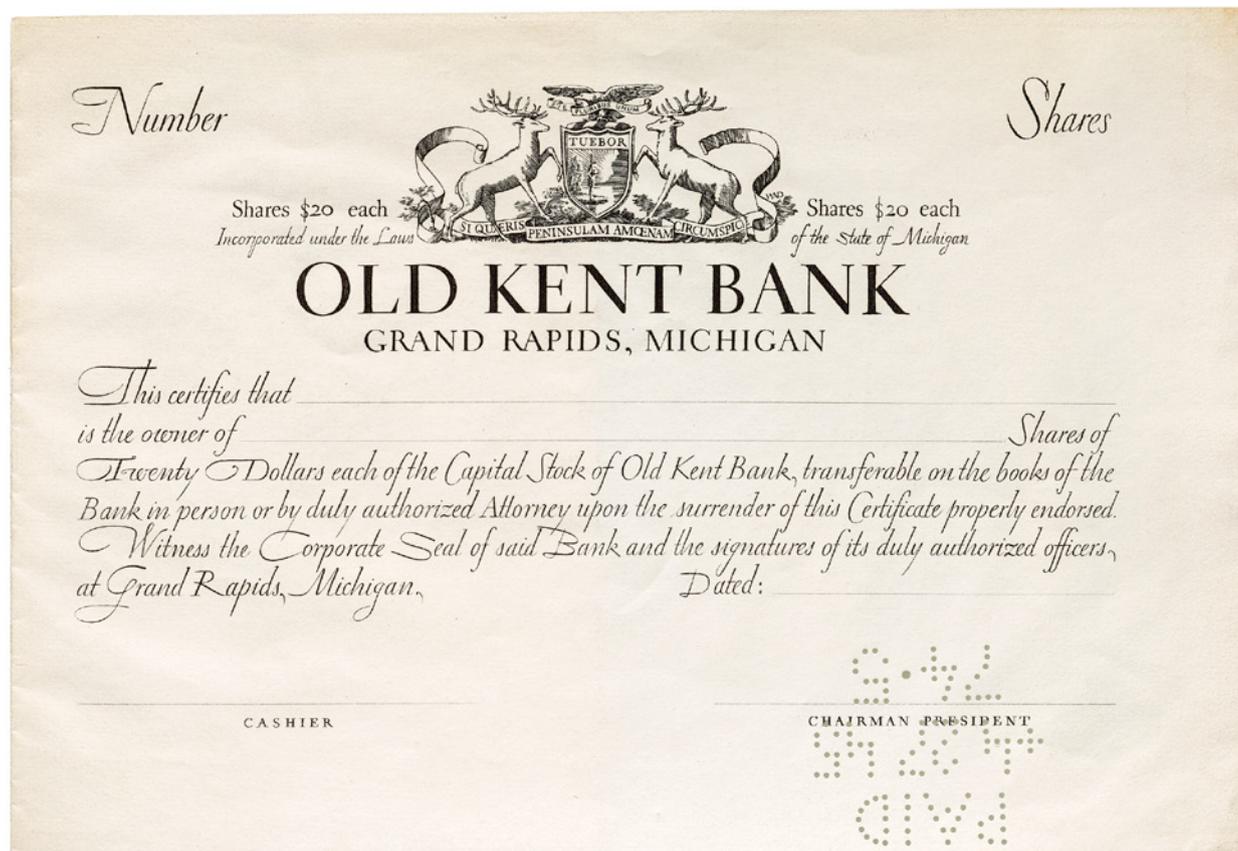




Interior spread from a Strathmore promotional folder, 1923. "Strathmore Furniture Galleries" was also a business in the imaginary Strathmore Town. The background has a subtle, all-over pattern printed in pale ochre ink on the off-white paper surface. Dwiggins built this pattern with stencils or wooden stamps. [SA]

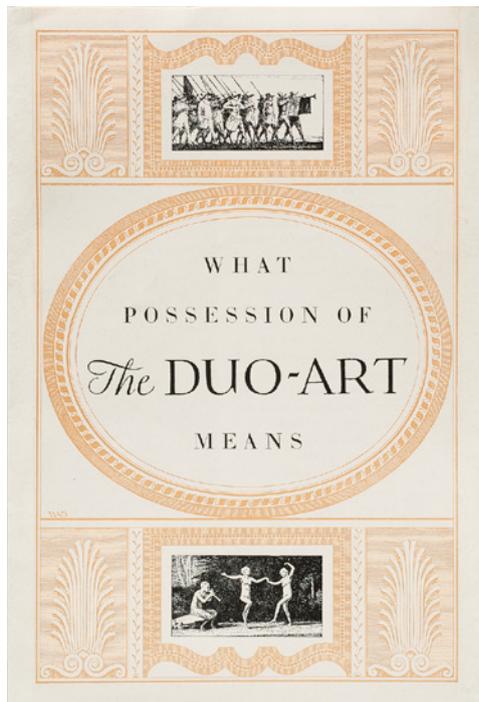


By the time Dwiggins produced this catalog, in 1929, for the Boston department store Filene's, he was in full flight with his stencil artwork. Wonderful Art Deco lettering, too. [BPL]



Stock certificate (actual size), entirely hand-lettered, 1929. When compared to the traditional certificates, this design was spare and elegant in the extreme. However, it still incorporated anti-counterfeit measures through the selection of a unique mill run of paper and several minor aspects of the printing. [LA]

This brochure for Duo-Art player pianos shows richly textured borders and acanthus details. The faun and dancers in the lower illustration may be suitable for the piano company, but they are also classic Dwiggin's. [BPL]



Paper companies may have been the predominant buyers of his hours, but others also sought his services: He created brochures for the Duo-Art and American player-piano companies, made advertisements for Tudor Coffee and the retailer Lord & Taylor, and created catalog designs for the Boston department store Filene's. For the juggernaut advertising agency Barton Durstine, in New York, where his friend Paul Hollister was an art director, Dwiggin's produced, on demand, numerous illustrations, ads, and logotypes, ranging from the drawing of a modern electric home to a portrait of former Harvard president Charles W. Eliot. Hollister also brought him the commission to design a beautiful stock certificate for a bank in Michigan, which gave Dwiggin's the opportunity to use calligraphy and white space in quiet, assured defiance of the practices of the companies that churned out traditional certificates full of elaborate scrollwork.

Dwiggin's particular skills with lettering and drawing made him a potent creator of official seals. In commissions secured through Updike and Rollins, he drew designs for

Pressmark Design: A Complicated Landscape

In 1927 Columbia University Press commissioned Dwiggins to make a new pressmark. He subsequently sent a note to Rollins with the heading “Sketches and acrimonious comment.” A few of his asides to Rollins are revealing of the complexities involved: “A press-mark that has to have the name of the press on it is a bum press-mark. The school seal should be so

modified that it is no longer the school seal. The school seal is a crabby design anyway. Perhaps the device should not be in a circle — get quite away from school seal so there is not confusion.” Dwiggins concluded the notes by saying that he liked only version 6, and urged Rollins to “vote for the iron crown!” Dwiggins’s sketches and notes below. [YALE]



1 Too loose



2 Possible but not very



3 Label comes out of crown ... rotten



4 Possible ... but looks like the end of a beer-barrel



5 Wild heraldry, poor design, but the square shape for the school arms offers something. Possible but not really a good imprint.



6 The only good press-mark in the lot. (The crown, I mean.)



7 The matter in the square designs nicely. Too much like a lodge emblem. Masonic, n.g. for Columbia



8 Good. If the arrangement of lettering offends (as it no doubt will) why not leave lettering off?



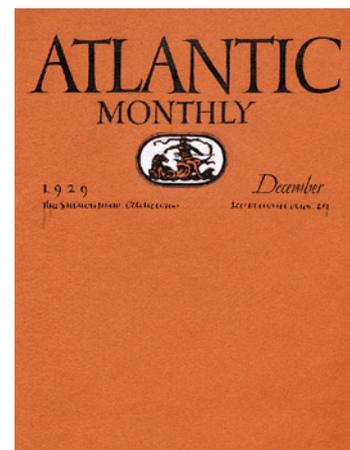
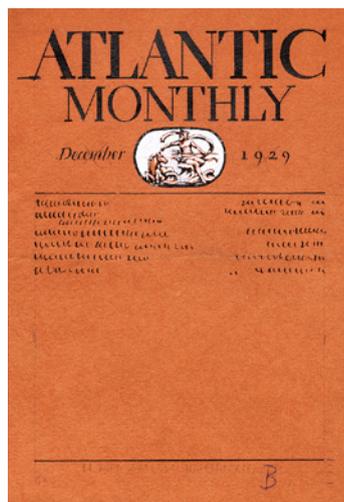
P

Final pressmark for Columbia University Press, 1927.

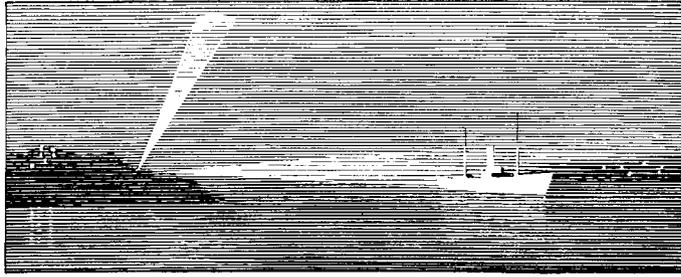
the American Chemical Society, the American Mathematical Society, the State of Connecticut, and Rutgers University and made pressmarks for the university presses of Columbia and Princeton.

He also found a new area for the application of his imagination and design skills: serial publications. During the 1920s, Dwiggins made new formats for a number of prominent national magazines. The value of his counsel lay not only in his visual solutions, but also, and of equal importance, in his understanding of the machinery and skilled labor involved in the composition and makeup of these publications, which had to run on very tight schedules.

The Marchbanks Press, in New York City, was an important resource for publishers and advertising agencies alike, producing high-quality books and a variety of collateral materials. Owner Hal Marchbanks, who was well known in the printing world, had established the tradition of a calendar to be used as a promotion for the press. Every year a prominent artist created twelve designs, then the press printed a single page each month and mailed it to customers. In 1925



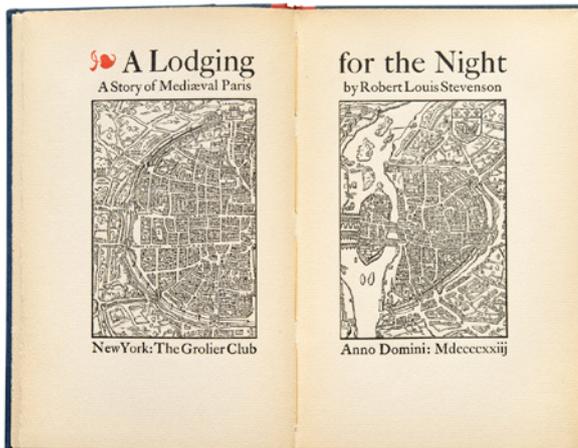
Two from a series of sketches for a new format, 1929. [LA]



Headpiece (actual size) for the chapter “Light and Its Uses,” in *Open Doors to Science*, Ginn, 1925. Note the skill with which Dwiggins used the surrounding dark tones to make the light beams and spotlight hull of the ship seem to be so bright when they are simply the unprinted surface of the paper. [BK]



Two of twelve calendar pages. April used four transparent inks plus black on gray paper. December was printed in gold, purple, and black on tan. Each month had a distinctly different style in paper, inks, and visual design. [BK]



Map by Dwiggins; typography and printing by Rollins, 1923. [BK]

Dwiggins was offered this assignment, and accepted it with relish. He also drew ornaments for the calendar of the Metropolitan Museum.

Charles Hovey Pepper, the noted Boston artist, was a tenant in the Fenway Studios building and had become a friend and supporter of Dwiggins. Pepper worked prodigiously and had exhibitions almost every year. Dwiggins designed a memorable series of announcements for these shows, encouraged by Pepper to use the notices as a means to experiment with color, ornament, texture, paper, and printing processes.

In a renewed flurry of collaborations with Carl Rollins, Dwiggins drew a map of the Yale campus and another of Paris — in wonderfully medieval style — for a book Rollins printed for the Grolier Club. He also drew countless illustrations for the textbooks of the local publisher Ginn & Company, on subjects as diverse as science, geography, history, and Latin. As he had done in earlier times, he generated book-cover designs, backstrips, and other bits of decoration for his regular list of publishing clients.

Most important to his sense of accomplishment, by the mid-1920s Dwiggins finally had the opportunity to create complete books, every aspect of the production firmly under his control. He now designed titles with his distinctive visual touches, not only for local publishers, but also for the houses that figured prominently on the national scene.

During his commute into Back Bay Station on the New Haven train from Hingham, Dwiggins continued to expand his suite of *Athalinthia* stories. When he could make time for it among his many deadlines, he also worked in the garden. Although Dwiggins was a dedicated stay-at-home person — and Mabel seemed to share fully in this practice — there were occasional exceptions: For a number of summers in the 1920s and as late as 1931, Chester Lane hosted the Dwigginses for two weeks of vacation on Ash Island, off Rockland on the coast of Maine, a place thoroughly wild and uninhabited. Lane was delighted to provide a way of life that was entirely foreign to the couple:

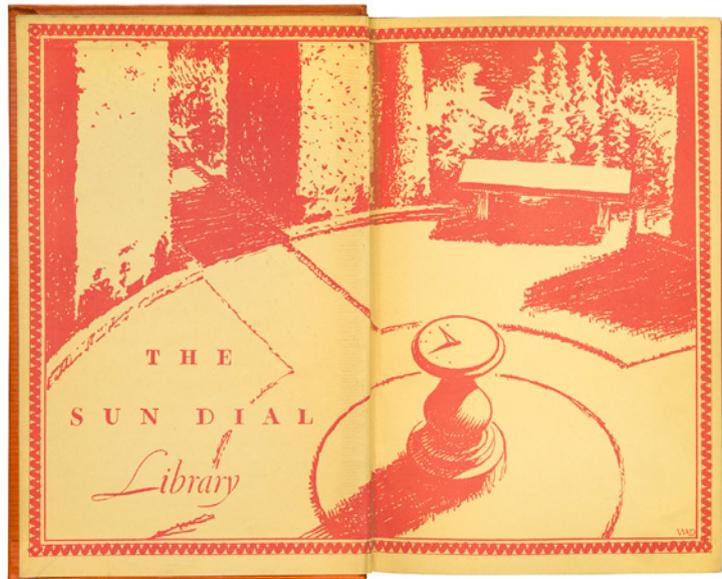
It was all very primitive. We lived in tents with practically no conveniences and were always conscious of the necessity of keeping a “weather eye” on the sky. Will adapted himself to this situation with amazing ease. He accepted the hardships cheerfully, quickly fell into the swing of our odd existence, and was, as always, a stimulating companion. . . . He left his impress not only on our minds and hearts but also in the form of two or three small carvings on the rocks.

From the moment they moved in, Dwiggins and Goss enjoyed the wide-open space and serenity of their new workplace, and took frequent breaks outdoors to explore the Fens, to search for insects and flowers, and to fly kites.

THE SENSE OF PEACE AND POSSIBILITY lasted only briefly, however: In 1923 Dwiggins was diagnosed with adult-onset diabetes, the same disease that had afflicted his father while he was still in his late thirties. Dwiggins was now forty-three and looking a death sentence straight in the eye. His diabetes was severe — the medical term is “brittle” — and difficult to control. Until that moment, no one with this disease had been able to escape its destruction. By extraordinary coincidence, in the preceding year four researchers at the University of Toronto had discovered insulin, and just as Dwiggins was diagnosed with diabetes, the Boston physician Elliot Joslin began distributing insulin to small groups of patients. Dwiggins was soon able to add insulin to his daily routine, and without its tempering effects on his condition, he would almost certainly have died in his forties. Dorothy Abbe observed him daily during the final ten years of his life, and wrote after his death:

Bill had rather frequent insulin reactions. Thus I began to understand what it meant to have diabetes, realizing the great responsibility one had in preparing proper menus. So we decided to maintain a very strict schedule, I to calculate everything for carbohydrates, proteins, and fats; he to keep a complete record of tests for sugar. This he did with his usual care: carefully ruled charts, some to be filled in with stencilled dots in one of six colors according to the amounts of sugar; some kept as graphs with a green line to show the ups and downs — records such as only a graphic artist would keep.

Dwiggins took his diagnosis as a sign that he must change the way he lived — and the changes had to be dramatic. Even though the insulin might keep death at arm’s length, for a few years at least, he would have to avoid travel, eat a strictly controlled diet for as long as he lived, and marshal his energy throughout every day. Although commercial work had been at the center of his activities and had comprised the main source of his income for the past decade, now he began to look differently on most of his advertising assignments and veered toward book design and his own artwork, despite the financial risks that would accompany this decision. In 1923 he sent a triumphant letter to Rollins:



Endpaper design for a series launched by Garden City Publishing in 1927. [BK]



Letterhead, hand-lettered and then engraved (only top portion is shown), late 1920s. [BPL]

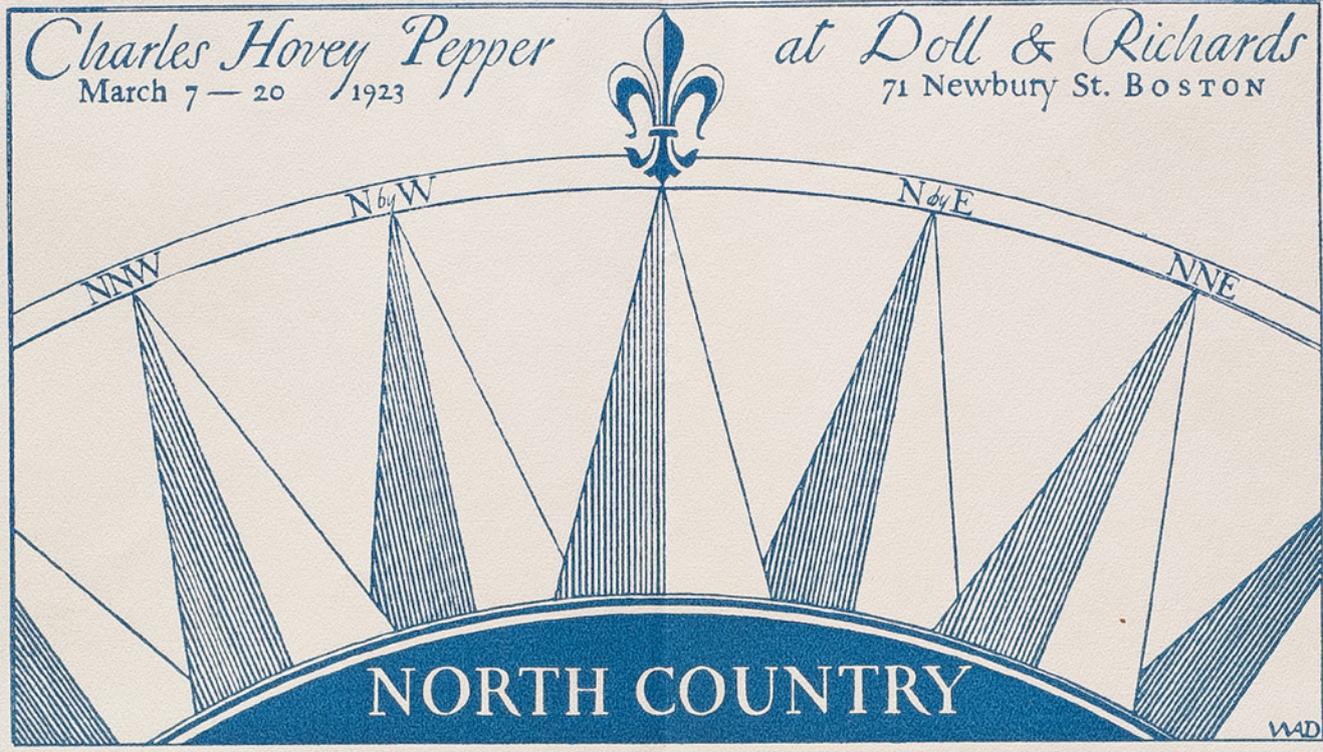


LEFT While he vacationed with Chester Lane on Ash Island, Dwiggins carved a fir tree on one of the rocks. He used a metal pie plate and two nails to lay out the design. The Lane family preserved this carving for generations and still use it as a symbol for their beloved island. [SF]

ABOVE Undated pencil sketch, made on the back side of a sheet of stationery from The Whitehall, an inn located in Camden, on the coast of Maine. Because Camden is close to the jumping-off point for Ash Island, this is almost certainly a drawing from one of Dwiggins’s vacation trips. [BPL]

Charles Hovey Pepper
March 7 — 20 1923

at *Doll & Richards*
71 Newbury St. BOSTON



FRANCE

CHARLES HOVEY PEPPER

at DOLL & RICHARDS

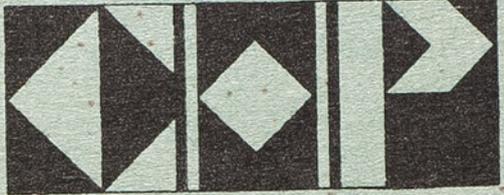
71 NEWBURY STREET BOSTON

March 13-25 1924

MD CCCC XXV

**CHARLES
HOVEY
PEPPER**

March 11~24
DOLL & RICHARDS
71 NEWBURY ST.
BOSTON



MDCC

CALIFORNIA

CHARLES HOVEY PEPPER
1926

~~~~~  
DOLL & RICHARDS  
71 NEWBURY ST. BOSTON  
**March 10-23**

Announcements (actual size), 1923 through 1926. Pepper encouraged Dwiggins to experiment with design and materials. [BPL]

CHARLES HOVEY PEPPER

MARCH 9-22

DOLL & RICHARDS

71 NEWBURY STREET BOSTON

CHARLES HOVEY PEPPER  
NORTH COUNTRY

DOLL & RICHARDS <sup>INC</sup> 1929  
138 NEWBURY STREET BOSTON  
*March 11-23 inclusive*

1928

MARCH 7-20

CHARLES HOVEY PEPPER  
*Maritime Alps*  
DOLL & RICHARDS  
138 NEWBURY STR.  
BOSTON

*Me I am a happy invalid and it has revolutionized my whole attack. My back is turned on the more banal kind of advertising, and I have cancelled all commissions and am resolutely set on starving. I shall undertake only the simple childish little things like YUP [Yale University Press] imprints that call for no compromise with the universal twelve-year-old mind of the purchasing public and I will produce art on paper and wood after my own heart with no heed to any market. Revolution, stark and brutal. . . . Go and be an invalid and your whole life will be simplified.*

A year later he wrote to Rollins, “I turn my back upon all Art Centers, all Teague hosiery ads, and all advertising in toto.”

Others might wither from such an illness, but Dwiggins seized on the diagnosis as a galvanizing and freeing moment. From then on his income remained lower than what he had earned in his commercial years, but he was unwavering in his devotion to doing what he loved most. Several of his friends recalled that he never seemed hurried, even when deadlines hovered relentlessly. The diabetes became an invitation to adventure.

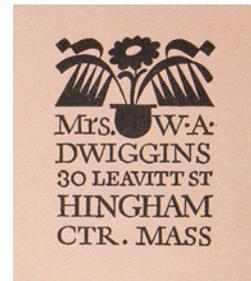
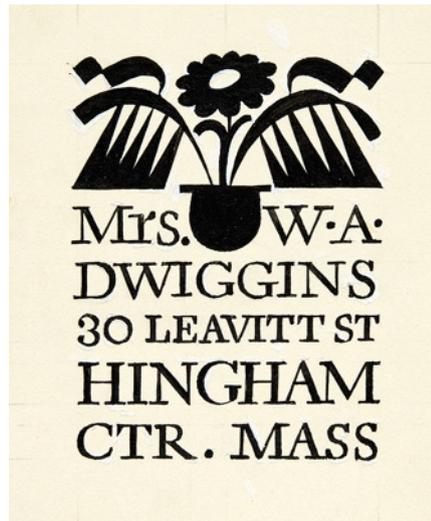
It seems something of a miracle — and an indication of the intensity of his desires — that Dwiggins was capable of producing so much work over the next thirty years, when his medical state was so challenging. In 1927 he wrote to Margaret Rollins, who had asked him to speak before her club in New Haven:

*[T]he fact of the matter is that I do not have the pep needful to make any kind of a talk. I have to nurse myself like a sick baby to keep up the voltage for the day's work; I hate to admit it, even to one of the family! Outside the family, of course, I say nothing about it, but to you I admit that there isn't any reserve to go upon. This is not as pathetic as it sounds — within the bounds of the regular routine I get along finely.*

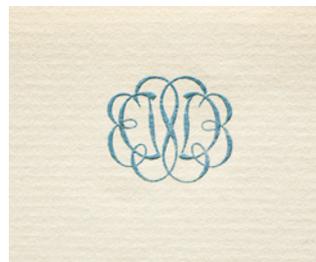
The change in course was a gradual one; he continued to do advertising work for a select group of clients into the 1930s. This was especially true of S. D. Warren, whose products he respected, and also because of the satisfaction he found in working with Watson Gordon, the art director, to develop Warren's promotional materials, which often had an educational mission — something Dwiggins heartily endorsed. Apart from the occasional projects for these legacy advertising clients, he now concentrated his attention



Bill and Mabel Dwiggins, no date. [BPL]



Return-address label, no date. LEFT Original artwork (actual size). ABOVE Final printed example (actual size). Stencil pattern and hand-lettering in India ink. [BPL]



ESD monogram from an engraved letterhead made by Dwiggins as a gift for his mother, Eva Siegfried Dwiggins (actual-size detail from top of letterhead). [BPL]