

HAMILTON WOOD TYPE



Eventually the company abandoned the veneer-style of manufacturing type for the more traditional and durable end-grain manufacturing approach, bringing it into direct competition with the major wood type companies in the East. With a plentiful supply of Wisconsin rock maple and Ed Hamilton's gift for understanding and improving industrial processes, the Hamilton Company soon became one of the most important suppliers of wood type in the world.

Although Ed Hamilton had little business experience when he started cutting out type with his scroll saw, he learned the type business quickly and began to find new ways to build his company's share of the wood type market. In addition to making high quality type more cheaply than other companies, Hamilton also came to understand that providing printers with an easy way to order a wide variety of font styles was another way to expand the business.

It was common practice for wood type companies to "borrow" the designs of their competitors and recut their own versions. Antique, Roman and Gothic are examples of popular faces of the time. During the 1890s, Hamilton began acquiring other wood type companies and found himself having to manage an extensive catalog of designs while supplying printers with a consistent product. If a printer wanted Wells version of Egyptian Extended, it was Hamilton's obligation to send the correct face. To that end, Hamilton Manufacturing released a now rare comparative specimen book in 1906, allowing salesman to correctly identify which version of each face belonged to whom.

Understanding the importance of maintaining control over its intellectual property, Hamilton included a special notice in its specimen book:

Cover and sample page from one of Hamilton's first comprehensive specimen books, circa 1906.



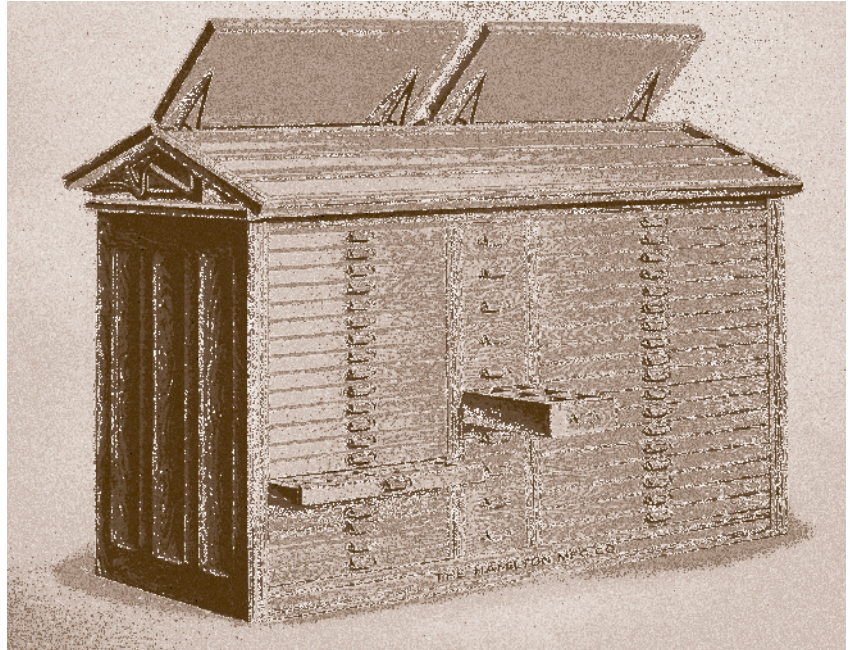
A HISTORY IN HEADLINES

This Wood Type Catalog No. 16, issued by the HAMILTON MANUFACTURING COMPANY, is not published for free distribution. The edition is limited and numbered, and whenever these books leave our hands, it is with the distinct understanding that the book is to remain our property, and subject to recall at any time. Under no other conditions will one of these books be sent to an inquiring customer. It has taken two generations to accumulate all of the material shown in this book, and for this reason we must protect our interests. Something like 1,500 different Designs are shown in this specimen book and it comprises the largest assortment of Type designs ever shown under one cover.

The Hamilton specimen book is the only known resource showing comparative font faces of all the major American manufacturers at the height of wood type's popularity.

In addition to "borrowing" designs from other type manufacturers, Hamilton extended its control of the wood type market by buying established type companies. The acquired company's unique fonts were folded into the Hamilton line, and Hamilton's ability to mass produce high-quality type allowed it to sell the product at lower prices. By 1900, the Hamilton Company had a virtual monopoly on the production of wood type in the United States and had begun shipping its type to printers across the world.

As his wood type business grew, Ed Hamilton spent a lot of time in print shops, which he found uniformly dirty and disorganized. Looking to expand his line of printer's supplies, Hamilton saw a business opportunity in the design and manufacture furniture and other supplies designed specifically for use in print shops. The equipment the company acquired when it bought



the old sash and door factory was well suited for the manufacture of wood furniture, and the company launched a new line of printer's supplies.

The printer's cabinetry side of the business grew rapidly, and by 1910 it represented a full two-thirds of Hamilton's business. The company soon added a similar line of furniture for dental offices. Dentists needed storage for tools and devices in their offices, and Hamilton's experience meeting the needs of print shops transferred well to the design and manufacture of this specialized furniture.

Encouraged by the success of its dental office line, Hamilton developed and launched a line of drafting room equipment in 1917. Within ten years, the Hamilton Company became the principal manufacturer

*Hamilton's No. 1
Double Polhemus
Cabinet designed to
store and compose type.*