Strictly speaking, a printing “companionship” is a small group of compositors working on a book, one of whom is the head, called a “clicker.”

Loosely speaking, I think of me and my Sumac Press as a companionship of a sort. I have been clickering along for 70 years come Christmas 1985. While I have never uttered a credo, I have found a working procedure that could be called rising to occasions. This rising is a falling in with companions or situations of interest.

To illustrate, a colleague at Syracuse University was always writing poems and throwing them into the waste basket. I filched one manuscript, printed it, and pleased his friends. He did not sue me. (Number 9 in the following list.)

I did the same with two of Logan Pearsall Smith’s *Trivia*, sent him a confessional copy, and received a reply saying, “I’m a pirate too.” (20)

Private printers floating around sometimes drop in for a joint print, and the “Impromptu Chappel” develops. (130, 134, 146)

My chairman of the English department at Hamline University was a stimulating teacher of creative writing. I offered to print and publish some of the student poems. One book was in boards, printed with a single font of type on a 4x6 bench model Caxton. (13) The other was hand set in the same font, but with display lines, 82 pages, treadled on a 7x11 welded nondescript without a throw-off, cloth bound by A. J. Dahl, a long-established Minneapolis family of binders. (23)

An undercover group of Sherlockians in the Twin Cities surfaced with several dissertations. I was enlisted. (65, 70, 77, 81, 107, 154, 166, 167) By then I had a New Series 8x12 Chandler and Price press, with an ink fountain and vibrating roller (which I still have). Composition was by Fred Phelps, whose father had pioneered trade composition in Minneapolis.

I caught some students at La Crosse State trying to write poetry. I said if they would organize and sell, I would print. They did, with over 30 *Fledglings* and *Quills*, 10 cents each.

I did some initiating on my own, such as printing excerpts of literary interest to me instead of underlining them in a book, feeling companionable in a general way with the authors. (17 items from 3 to 88)
Title pages of six Sumac Press books, from copies in The University of Iowa Libraries.
Another form of companionship was attending meetings of the Amper­
sand Club in Minneapolis and printing notices and a Prospectus. (104) A
brief pleasure was attending meetings of the Society of Printers in Boston
as a guest of my preceptor, George P. Winship, for whom I got up a list
of Merrymountiania (which I ran through a typewriter).

Enough on this line. Sumac is one kind of a private press—not “fine,”
“alternative,” “bibliographical”—but personal, like Henry Daniel’s and,
like his, long lived.

But I am not in the Daniel class. I am a job shop sort of printer, having
learned under a job printer who directed the work of the Boys’ Printing
Club at my church. He also hired me after school for a winter in his shop
downtown. In one of my Press Preterites (131) I gleefully reprinted a com­
ment by William M. Cheney, the gist of which was that one gets tired of
the plushy presses and gets back with relief to a job shop as to meat and
potatoes.

Job shops are of many kinds as, for example, the Merrymount Press of
Daniel Berkeley Updike who would print anything, provided he had con­
control of design.

And how about the Prairie Press of Carroll Coleman? Single-handedly
he put Iowa on the map of significant private presses. His equipment is
that of a job shop. He knows how to use it to the extent of Fifty Books
quality. He knows how to get new texts to encourage new writers of even­
tual acclaim. And he is being succeeded admirably by other important pri­
ivate presses in Iowa.

Back to Sumac. I bought type slowly. From Cheltenham I went to Cas­
lon 471 on the advice of the American Printer’s reviewer of specimens.
I went on my own advice to Bulmer, because the American Type Founders
displayed it beautifully; and it was available downtown when I was in Min­
neapolis.

Then Californian from Richard Hopkins who shared one of our “Im­
promptu Chappels.” And Legend, and Libra, and Melior, and Bembo.
Fred Phelps gave me a case of Tell Text which he, an alumnus of Porter
Garnett’s Laboratory Press, used in a “master” book after graduation.
Also Ed Erickson, a Rudge foreman during the Bruce Rogers years, gave
me a two-thirds case of Centaur, in which I printed Smith’s two Trivia.

I will not push this companionable/companionship further than to men­
tion the help which fellow Ampersander, Arnett Leslie (of John Leslie
Paper), gave me in getting paper in small quantities. He put me on to
Worthy Hand and Arrows, the most amiable paper of the century, I do
believe. I have used other print-happy papers: Warren’s Olde Style, Curtis
Rag, Howard Permalife, Strathmore Text, Mohawk Letterpress. Never
have I used handmades, though I have a ream of Winterstoke tucked away
somewhere. I am afraid of it.
Glancing over the tersely detailed checklist which follows, a reader may think it miscellaneous and not programmed. Yes, it is miscellaneous in the way I have indicated. Mostly I have responded to chance typographical associations with family and friends. Programmatic, no, definitely. I have wandered from my programmed life of teaching English, a strong interest also, into side roads of personal byplay and private pleasure, thanks to Sumac, an outcome of an educational toy under a Christmas tree.

Not only were the associations rewarding, but also the problem of turning copy into print. Legibility is first, of course, but not enough. The real problem is readability. How the pages are to be held and opened, how comfortable the size and shape of the type, how optically arranged the words and spaces, how illustrations blend with the type and certainly how they set up the text, how color is controlled, what materials are available, even how weight and shape of the finished piece fit the postal regulations.

Then there is the work of the hands in the shop, as for example, copy fitting, word spacing, watching the nicks, makeready, precision of register, ink control, feeding quickly and accurately. There is a starter!

The insurance tables give me another decade, and I will continue to try printing good writing in good style. Style is “good” in many ways. In building a typographic library and a collection of “press” books, I am quite aware of how many and varied are the “clickers” past and present. Much to learn, much to attempt, never an absolute.

I could hope no better joy for a friend than a personal press.

A Sumac Press Checklist

NOTE. This list is drawn from six fascicles called Press Preterite appearing at irregular intervals. Some stylistic variations remain to suggest the passage of years. Sizes (12mo, 8vo, etc.) are impressionistic, not bibliographic. All items are first issues; therefore no issue “points.”

1916-29
1. A Little Information, a magazine edited by Richardson Rome and E. G. W. 1916. Five numbers. 16mo, 64 pages.
3. A Christmas Carol, the first written on English soil. 1928. 16mo, 8 pages, wrapper. 100 copies for friends.
5. Pulvis et Umbra, by Robert Louis Stevenson. 1929. 32mo, 64 pages, paperboards. 80 copies “for the fun of it.”
7. Very Small Books, by E. G. W. 1929. 64mo, 8 pages, accordion pleat binding. 50 copies. Alleluia!

1930-1939
10. Gutenberg Bible Leaf. A two-page facsimile of an original in the library of E. G. W. 1930. Folio, 4 pages. 300 copies. (Printed by Harrison and Smith.)
11. Success in Life, a passage from Walter Pater. 1930. 16mo, 4 pages, wrapper. 150 copies.
12. Deep Rust, by Andrew A. Brandt. 1930. 16mo, 24 pages, paperboards (bound by the author). 75 copies for the author.
13. Selected Poems, by students in Hamline University. 1930. 12mo, 24 pages, paperboards. 60 copies for the university.
15. A Christenmesse Carol, written long ago for 1930. 16mo, 4 pages. 50 copies.
17. A Liberal Education, extract, by Thomas Henry Huxley. 1931. 16mo, 12 pages. 80 copies.
19. A Trifle from More Trivia, by Logan Pearsall Smith. 1932. 16mo, 4 pages. 50 copies.
20. Two Essays in Juxtaposition, by Logan Pearsall Smith. 1933. 32mo, 8 pages. 50 copies.
21. Sterne’s Patchwork Essay, a “Sterne first patched up” by E. G. W. 1933. 16mo, 16 pages.
22. Stevenson to Alice Cunningham, a letter and a previously not published photograph. 16mo, 8 pages. 40 copies.
24. White Crows, notes on Silver Ridge, by various residents. 1934. 12mo, 48 pages, cloth boards. 100 copies for the authors.
25. A Snippet, from Stevenson’s Christmas Sermon. 1934. 16mo, 4 pages. 70 copies.
27. In the Gloaming, steamboat version. 1935. 16mo, 4 pages. 40 copies.
28. Joel Roberts Poinsett, and his namesake flower. 1935. 8vo, 8 pages. 50 copies.
29. A Comp’s-Eye View of Words, by E. G. W. 1936. 12mo, 16 pages, cloth boards. 100 copies.
30. Thomas Bird Mosher, by Christopher Morley. 1936. 16mo, 12 pages. 90 copies.
32. Bewick, a wood engraving from an original block. 1937. 16mo, leaflet, 50 copies.
1940-49

34. Five Centuries of Famous Printers, a catalog of an exhibition in observance of the semimillenium of European printing. 1940. 16mo, 8 pages. 100 copies.
36. [A New Year Selection], from William Hazlitt. 1941. 12mo, 8 pages. 175 copies.
37. Bibliomania, a Somewhat Unapologetic Apology, by E. G. W. 1941. 12mo, 12 pages, wrappers. 70 copies.
41. Charles Frederick Chandler, a retrospect by Frederick J. Wulling. 1944. 12mo, 28 pages. 200 copies. Cover stock folded to provide shelfback.
42. Thirty-five, by J. C. W. 1945. One copy.
43. Peter Wendover Bedford, a retrospect by Frederick J. Wulling. 1945. 12mo, 16 pages, wrapper. 250 copies.
44. Press Preterite 1945, by E. G. W. 16mo, 12 pages, wrappers. 90 copies.
45. Melendy Memorial Lectures, by Frederick J. Wulling. 1946. 8vo, 89 pages, cloth by Dahl. 250 copies.
46. Pot-pourri, by Students in La Crosse State. 1947. 8vo, 16 pages, self cover. 100 copies.
47. The Merrymount Program, by Daniel Berkeley Updike. 16mo, 8 pages, wrapper. 81 copies.
50. Frederick John Wulling, 1866-1947, by Carl H. Olson. 1947. 8vo, 12 pages, wrapper. 100 copies.
51. Fledgling 2, by Students in La Crosse State. 1947. 8vo, 16 pages, self cover. 300 copies.
52. Badger Folklore, I:1, edited by W. H. Glover. 1948. 8vo, 32 pages, wrapper. 1,000 copies.
53. Fledgling 3, by Students in La Crosse State. 1948. 8vo, 16 pages, self cover. 300 copies.
54. Pharmacy Forward, by Frederick J. Wulling. 1948. 8vo, 123 pages, cloth by Dahl. 500 copies.
55. Fledgling 4, by Students in La Crosse State. 1948. 8vo, 20 pages, self cover. 300 copies.
56. Fledgling 5, by Students in La Crosse State. 1949. 8vo, 16 pages, self cover. 300 copies.
57. Fledgling 6, by Students in La Crosse State. 1949. 8vo, 16 pages, wrapper. 300 copies.
58. Sterne on Shandyism, by Laurence Sterne. 1949. 8vo, 12 pages, wrapper. 90 copies. (#21 redesigned.)
59. Fledgling 7, by Students in La Crosse State. 1950. 8vo, 16 pages, self cover. 300 copies.
62. Fledgling 8, by Students in La Crosse State. 1951. 8vo, 16 pages, wrapper. 300 copies.
63. A Program for the Teachers Colleges, by Eugene H. Kleinpell. 1951. 8vo, 8 pages, self cover. 3,000 copies.
64. Press Marks of Sumac, 1951. 8vo, 12 pages, self cover. 90 copies.
66. Fledgling 9, by Students in La Crosse State. 1951. 8vo, 16 pages, wrapper. 300 copies.
67. Fledgling 10, by Students in La Crosse State. 1952. 8vo, 16 pages, self cover. 300 copies.
68. Fledgling 11, by Students in La Crosse State. 1952. 8vo, 20 pages, wrapper. 300 copies.
71. Fledgling 12, by Students in La Crosse State. 1952. 8vo, 16 pages, self cover. 300 copies, with a two-page serigraph in three colors by John Rogers.
73. Fledgling 13, by Students in La Crosse State. 1953. 8vo, 28 pages, self cover. 300 copies.
74. Fledgling 14, by Students in La Crosse State. 1953. 8vo, 20 pages, self cover. 300 copies.
75. A Comp's-Eye View of Footnotes, by Emerson G. Wulling. 1953. 16mo, 28 pages, shelfback wrapper. 450 copies. (350 for the Typophiles.)
77. Lincoln's Imagery, by Theodore C. Blegen. 1954. Tall 8vo, 32 pages, cloth by Campbell. 780 copies.
78. Fledgling 16, by Students in La Crosse State. 1954. 8vo, 16 pages, wrapper. 300 copies.
80. Catalogue Number 34, by Norbert Halliwell. 1956. 8vo, 28 pages, self cover. 2,000 copies.
82. Fledgling 19, by Students in La Crosse State. 1957. 8vo, 16 pages, self cover. 300 copies.

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83. Fledgling 20, by Students in La Crosse State. 1957. 8vo, 24 pages, self cover. 300 copies.
84. Fledgling 21, by Students in La Crosse State. 1958. 8vo, 16 pages, self cover. 275 copies.
85. Fledgling 22, by Students in La Crosse State. 1959. 8vo, 20 pages, self cover. 300 copies.
86. Fledgling 23, by Students in La Crosse State. 1959. 8vo, 24 pages, self cover. 300 copies.
87. Fledgling 24, by Students in La Crosse State. 1959. 8vo, 20 pages, self cover. 300 copies.

1960-69
106. My Favorite Type, by Emerson G. Wulling. 1965. Narrow octavo, 4 pages. (To celebrate 50 years of printing.)

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http://ir.uiowa.edu/bai/vol42/iss1
108. Music Calendar, for La Crosse season 1965. Triptych folder. 800 copies.

1970-79
119. Voyages to the Inland Sea, poems and essays by Lisel Mueller, John Knoepfle, and Dave Etter. Edited by John Judson, for the Center for Contemporary Poetry, Wisconsin State University-La Crosse. 1971. 8vo, cloth by Frank Nekola. 96 pages. 500 copies. (50 signed.)
120. Prospectus, for above item. 1971. 4to, broadside. 800 copies.
121. Three Essays, from item 119. 1971. 8vo, wrappers, 32 pages. 300 copies.
122. The Fascination of Sherlock Holmes, by Herbert F. West. 1971. 8vo, wrappers. 12 pages. 100 copies for the author.
125. Boy on a Flat Rock, by John Judson. 1971. 8vo, leaflet. 100 copies.
129. Three Bibliographies, from item 127. 1972. 8vo, wrappers. 16 pages. 200 copies.


133. Where Put the Table of Contents?, by Emerson G. Wulling. 1973. 5x7 leaflet. 265 copies for William F. Haywood's IaSW.


137. Voyages to the Inland Sea, IV, essays and poems by Alvin Greenberg, George Chambers, and Raymond Roselip. With bibliographies of the authors. Edited by John Judson, for the Center for Contemporary Poetry, Wisconsin State University-La Crosse. 1974. 8vo, 80 pages, cloth by Frank Nekola. 500 copies. (50 signed.)


141. Some Interesting Borders, by Gary Hantke and E. G. W. 1975. 16mo, four-page leaflet displaying Intertype borders, gift of Dr. James Eckman. Joint venture by the authors. About 225 copies.


143. Printing Collections, by Emerson G. Wulling. 1975. 5x7 leaflet. 250 copies for William F. Haywood's IaSW.


147. Voices from the Forest, by Lisel Mueller. 1977. 8vo, 36 pages. For John Judson. 300 copies soft cover, 50 hard cover.


149. Check List of Private Printings, by Fred Totten Phelps. 1977. 8vo, 20 pages and cover. 270 copies.

150. Subject to Change, by Felix Pollak. 1978. 8vo, 36 pages. For John Judson. 300 copies soft cover, 50 hard cover.


153. The Double Knee Composing Stick, by Emerson G. Wulling. 1978. 5x9 leaflet. 195 copies.


1980-85


159. Supplement to 156. 1982. Tall 8vo, 8 pages. 290 copies.


165. The Real Sherlock Holmes, by E. W. McDiarmid. 1984. 12 pages and cover, plus a single leaf foldout. For the Norwegian Explorers. 400 copies.


168. This Space Blank, by Gary Hitham. 1984. 32mo, 16 pages and cover. 220 copies for John Judson.

