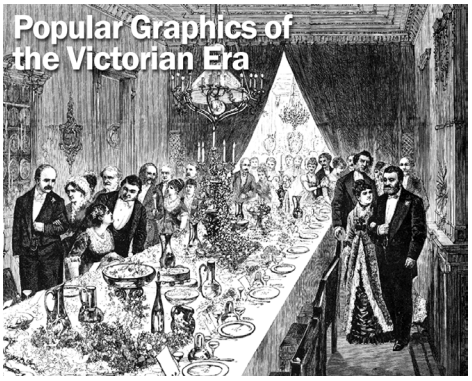
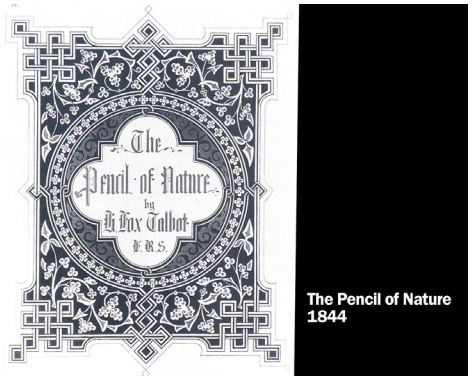


Chapter 9c: Popular Graphics of the Victorian Era

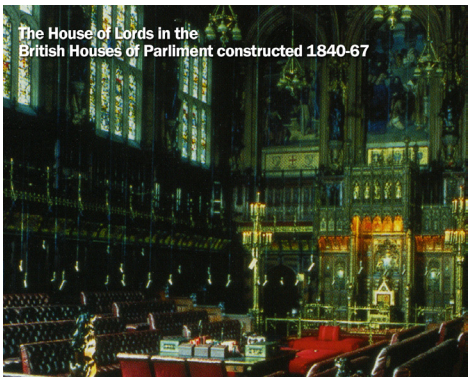
Queen Victoria (1819-1901) reigned Great Britain and Ireland and her rule spanned two thirds of the 19th century.

Is is from her name "The Victorian Era" comes from.

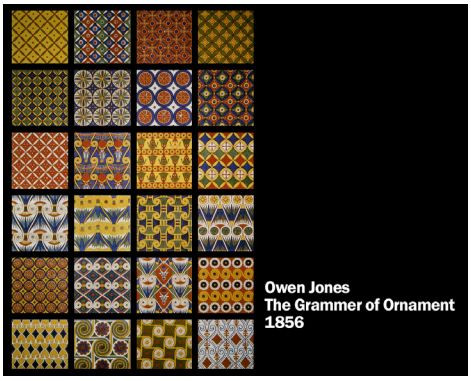


It was a time of strong moral and religious beliefs... Of proper social conventions and of optimism.

The design style of this period was often a bit confusing and hodge-podge. A large portion of their design styles were inspired and mimicked the earlier Gothic period. Borrowing from this previous time period suited their pious leanings.



A specific architect, W.N. Pugin was a major influence o this borrowing from the Gothic period... He designed the ornamental details of the British House of Parliament.



The English designer, Owen Jones, become a major influence in graphic design in the mid-century when he published “The Grammar of Ornament”.

During his mid 20s he traveled to Spain and the near East and studied Islamic design. He published his studies and that became the ornament bible for the Victorian ear, and was applied to everything from furniture to borders and the lettering in graphic design..

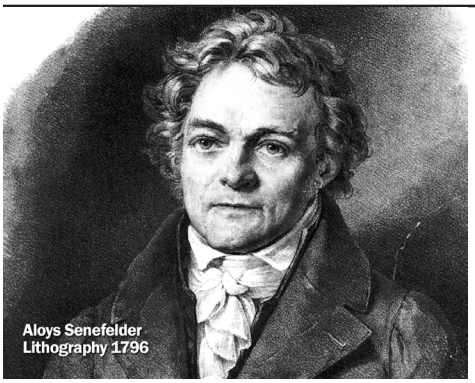
1850 saw the Victorian Era as a common spirit, culture and moral standards. And graphic design captured and conveyed the prevalent values: Sentimentality, nostalgia, and idealized beauty.

Traditionalized values of home, religion and patriotism were symbolized with sweetness and piety.

In terms of graphic design it can be said that Victorians had a strong love of ornamental complexity.

Printed images of children, maidens, puppies and flowers were plentiful and common.

The production medium for this outpouring was an innovation of the industrial revolution called Chromolithography.



Aloys Senefelder
Lithography 1796

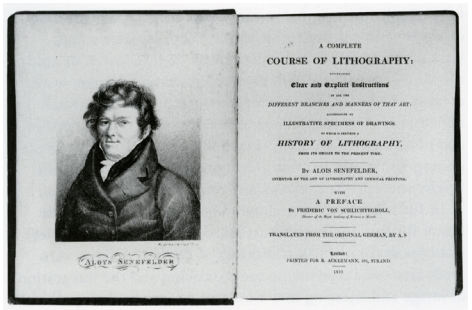
THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHROMOLITHOGRAPHY

Lithography-- literally from the Greek word "Stone Printing", was invented by Bavarian author Aloys Senefelder in 1796.

He was seeking a cheap way to print his own writings with etched stones and metal relief during his revelation.

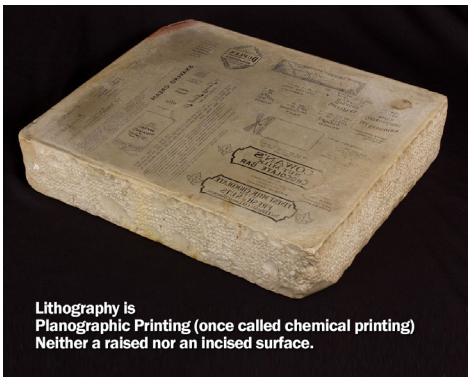
One day, his mother called out a list of stuff for him to pickup when he went out for that day.

He was in his workshop, and lacking a handy piece of paper, he grabbed a grease pencil and wrote the list down on one of his printing stones.


A COMPLETE
COURSE OF LITHOGRAPHY:
Clear and Explicit Instructions
IN THE
DIFFERENT BRANCHES AND MANNERS OF THAT ART;
ILLUSTRATIVE SPECIMENS OF DRAWINGS
HISTORY OF LITHOGRAPHY,
By ALOIS SENEFELDER,
A PREFACE
By FREDERIC VON SCHLICHTEGROLL,
TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL GERMAN, BY A.S
ALOYS SENEFELDER

Aloys Senefelder
A Complete Course of Lithography 1819

It dawned on him that the stone could be etched away around the pencil marks to create a raised printing plate. But the culmination of his thinking went much further... He invented lithography, which is printing from neither a raised surface nor an incised surface.

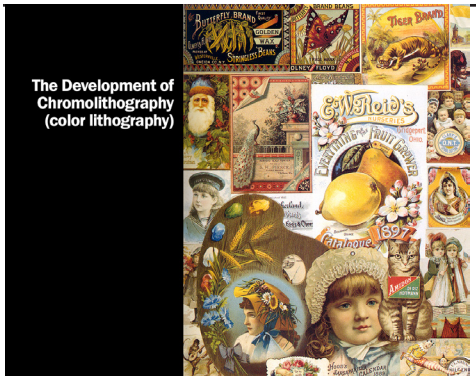


Lithography is
Planographic Printing (once called chemical printing)
Neither a raised nor an incised surface.

This kind of printing is called planographic printing.

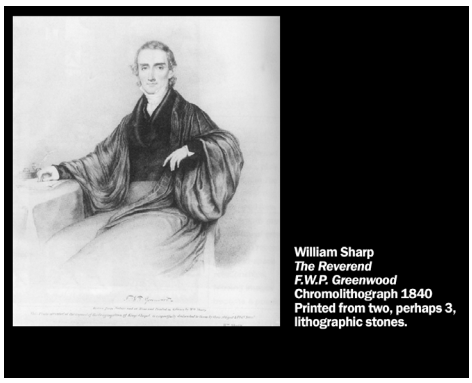
Lithography is based on a simple chemical principle: that oil and water do not mix.

An image is drawn on a flat stone using an oil base pencil or pen. Water is then spread on the stone. Then an oil based ink is rolled on. A piece of paper then is applied and thus the image is transferred.



French printer Godefroy Engelmaan patented Chromolithography in 1837... Is is color lithography.

After Analyzing the colors contained in an image, the printer separated them into a series of printing plates and then printed the component colors, one-by-one. Usually one color, often the black stone, would become the establishing plate.



THE BOSTON SCHOOL OF CHROMOLITHOGRAPHY

American chromolithography began in Boston when William Sharp, an English printer, moved there from England in 1829

His intent was to replicate a painting as close as possible. His first print was of a Reverend of a local congregation.

Sharp continued to print sheet music, portraits and floral plates for the next 25 years.

In 1846 American inventory Richard M. Hoe invented the rotary lithographic press, which increased production sixfold from presses previous.

It allowed for much cheaper color printing and opened the floodgates for everything from art prints to advertising.

John H. Bufford's Sons - *Swedish Song Quartett Poster*, 1867

The next major Boston innovator was John H. Bufford, who was a master draftsman, who's work achieved a stunning realism.

Specializing in posters, book covers, art prints and magazine illustrations, Bufford often used five or more colors in his work.

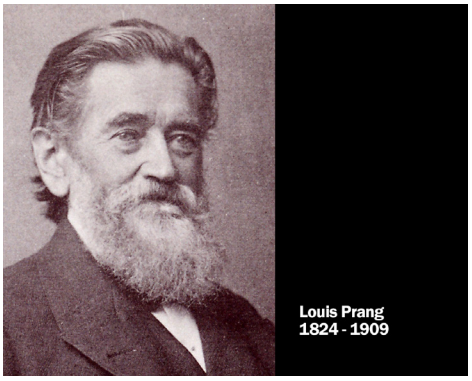
The meticulous tonal drawing of his black stone always became the master plate.

Extreme attention to tonal qualities and perfect printing registration achieved near photographic quality.

S.S. Frizzall (artist) and J. H. Bufford's Sons (printers) 1884

Bufford's sons entered the family business and continued to print political material as well, integrating type and borders.

American lithography maintained a German heritage... High quality Bavarian printing stones were imported to the states and the Düsseldorf Academy of Art was the training school for artists that created lithographic art.



Louis Prang
1824 - 1909

A German innovator, Louis Prang, migrated to America in 1850 and his printing company became one of the most prolific of the Victorian Era.

Popular narrative and romantic painting of the Victorian era was closely linked to the illustrations of chromolithogrpahy... Including the work of Prang.

He often held contests to acquire subjects for his printed images.

Sheridan's Ride, chromolithograph by Louis Prang & Co

As well as making Civil War maps and scenes, and art reproductions, Prang also printed millions of little color album cards called “Scrap”.

Scrap Card, chromolithograph by Louis Prang & Co

Collecting these little art images was a major Victorian pastime and Prang’s wildflowers, butterflies and animals, etc., Became the ultimate expression of the Victorian love of sweetness and nostalgia and traditional values.

The first Christmas Card. John Callcot in 1843

Prang is called the father of the Christmas Card for pioneering work in holiday graphics. (Although the first actual card is believed to have been done by British lithographer John Callcot in 1843).

Louis Prang & Co.
Christmas Card.

Prang, after producing Christmas prints in the 1860's, published an English Christmas card in 1873 and American cards the next year.

Louis Prang & Co.
Valentine's Card
1883

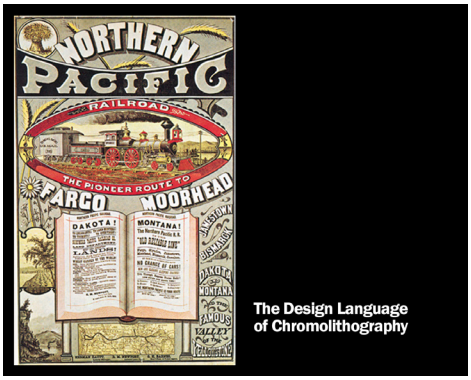
And very soon after a full line of designs followed, and Easter, Birthday, Valentine, and New Year's card were produced annually by the L. Prang and Company during the early 1880's.

Prang obtained excellent quality and used as many as forty stones for one print.

The popular album cards became advertising trade cards.

Album cards soon evolved into advertising trade cards. Prang sold his card in bulk, with open areas that could be imprinted.

Prang began to give his daughter art lessons in 1856, and found no nontoxic materials. So be began to manufacture water colors and crayons for children. There were no children's art instruction books so began to make those as well.



The Design Language of Chromolithography

THE DESIGN LANGUAGE OF CHROMOLITHOGRAPHY

From Boston, Chromolithography quickly spread to other major cities.

Letterpress printers were appalled by chromolithography, where type was designed by the illustrator, instead of the printing compositor.

This opened up font design in a major way and created a graphic revolution around the artist that created these lithographs.

Butterfly Brand Card

In integration of illustration and type can be seen in the Butterfly Brand Card.

Peacock Brand Card

Trompe-l'oeil:
an art technique that uses realistic imagery to create the optical illusion that the depicted objects exist in three dimensions.

The peacock brand card uses Tromp e-l'oeils, which were very popular with Victorian graphic designers.

Trompe-l'œil is an art technique that uses realistic imagery to create the optical illusion that the depicted objects exist in three dimensions.

Our Navy premium booklet 1888

The booklet OUR NAVY used complex borders and 3D ornaments to bring together disparate elements.

Poster for traveling carnivals created by the Parker Carousel Company (with banner for imprinting)

Traveling circuses and carnivals used bright colors and had areas to imprint for locations.

Poster for the Cincinnati Industrial Exposition 1883

Victorians were also very fond of allegory and this poster for a big exposition shows symbolic figures.

Lithographic theatre poster 1884

Complex montage designs were also used often, and the slower pace of life is evidence in the detail.

Designs chromolithographed on tin for food and tobacco packages.

Labels and packaging also become an important area for chromolithography.

But printing on nonporous materials, such as tin, was difficult.

At mid century transfer printing processes were developed where reversed images were printed on thin paper, then transferred to sheet metal under great pressure. The paper backing was then soaked off, leaving the image behind.

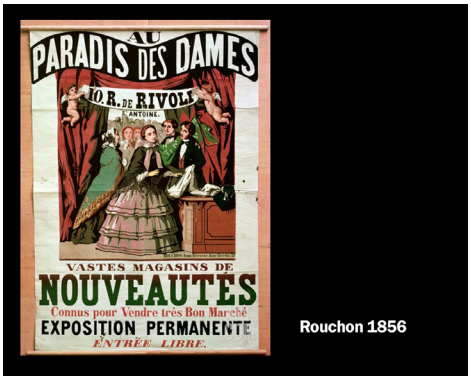
In 1875 Robert Barclay come us with a system where an image drawn on stone was picked up by nonabsorbent cardboard cylinder, then immediately offset onto the sheet metal. He later used rubber coated cylinders.

Currier Lithograph Co., Poster promoting Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show - 1899

Chromolithography began to decline at the end of the century when the technology of photoengraving started to flourish.

One of the most famous lithographic art reproductions firms in the United States, Currier and Ives, produced a variety of sentimental imagery as well as commercial advertising went Bankrupt shortly after the turn of the century.

THE BATTLE OF THE SIGN BOARDS

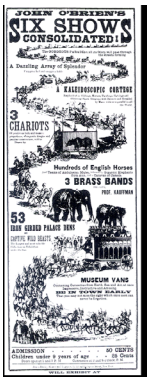


Rouchon 1856

During the mid 1800s, posters and signboards were much more dynamic because of chromolithography and notable is the work from printing firm of Rouchon which used bright contrasting colors instead of the subtle tonal qualities.

Letterpress printers responded to the competition of the chromolithographers by ingenious methods.

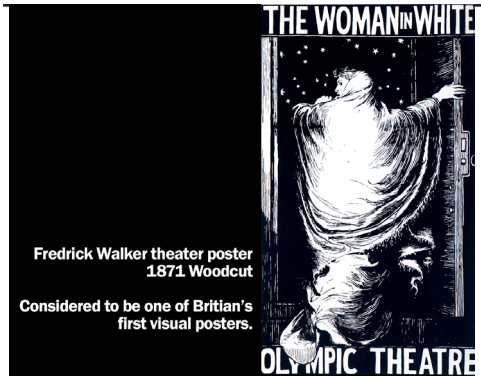
Joseph Morse, multicolored woodblock poster, 1856
8.5' x 11' used life sized figures

Joseph Morse of New York created this 8.5 foot by 11 foot cirrus poster woodblocks that were then pasted together.

Poster for John O'Brien's circus 1866.
Several wood engravings were pieced together to create an endless circus parade.

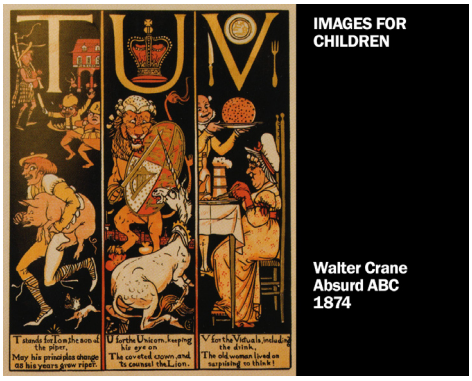
James Reily of New York designed ingenious ways to increase the pictorial impact of woodblock and type designs.

Cirque D'Hiver poster, 1871. Chromolithography and Relief.
Performers are presented as surreal butterfly women.

Some firms joined forces, combing chromolithography and letterpress, and the color prints were pasted on to letterpress work.



Frederick Walker, theater poster, 1871. This oversized wood engraving has a fluid, calligraphic quality in the drawing of the clothing in contrast to the rectangular forms of the door frame and lettering.



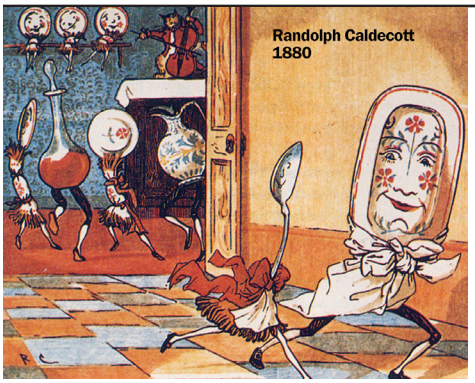
IMAGES FOR CHILDREN

Before the Victorian age, western countries treated children as little adults. The Victorians developed a more doting and tender attitude towards children.

Graphics and books for children had been instructional and moral exercises.

During the Victorian age Walter Crane became an influential designer of children's books.

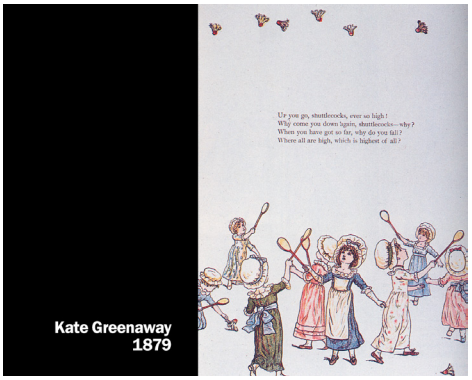
Unlike the preaching of traditional children's books, Crane sought only to entertain with his woodblock illustrations. Drawing inspiration for Japanese prints, crane used flat colors and contoured lines.



While Craine entertained, Randolf Caldecott sought to amuse children.

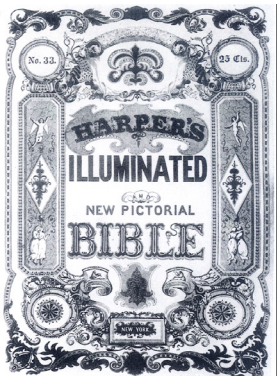
He possessed a tremendous sense of the absurd and had the ability to exaggerate movement and facial expressions of both people and animals. His work became the prototype for children's books and films to this day.

Hey! diddle, diddle,
The cat and the fiddle,
The cow jumped over the moon;
The little dog laughed
To see such sport,
And the dish ran away with the spoon



Kate Greenaway's books were humorless compared to Caldecott's, but her work really reflected the sensibilities of Victorian life. She used soft colors and innovative page design.

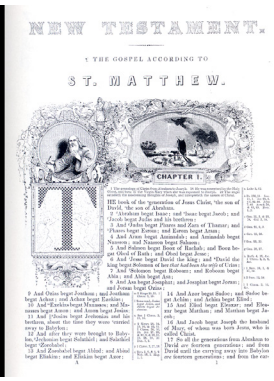
Her work become so popular that the drawings influenced children's fashion design of the day.



Joseph A. Adams,
Cover design for
Harper's Illuminated And New Pictorial Bible
1844

THE RISE OF AMERICAN EDITORIAL AND ADVERTISING DESIGN

In 1817 James and John Harper mortgaged the family farm and started a publishing and printing company that by mid century had become the largest in the world. Harper and Brothers helped shape graphic design for a half century.

In the 1840s they launched a project that was the biggest to date. Harper's Illuminated and New Pictorial Bible, printed on custom presses, contained 1,600 wood engravings and was hand-sewn and bound in heavy paper two-color covers.

NEW TESTAMENT.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO

ST. MATTHEW.

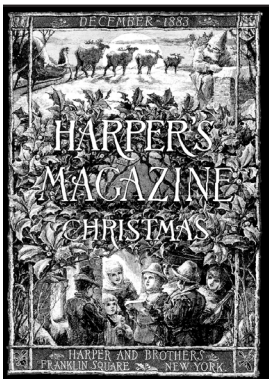
CHAPTER 1.

Joseph A. Adams,
Page from the
Harper's Illuminated And New Pictorial Bible
1844

The woodblock engraver, Joseph Adams, developed an electrotyping process during the production of the book.

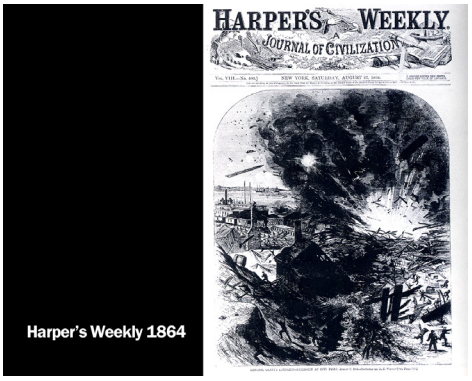
The wood engraving was pressed into wax to make a mold, which was then dusted with graphite to make it electro-conductive. Then an electro deposit of metal (usually copper) was made in the mold. Then the thin shell was filled up with lead.

This harder surface made it possible for Harper to publish over 50,000 copies.



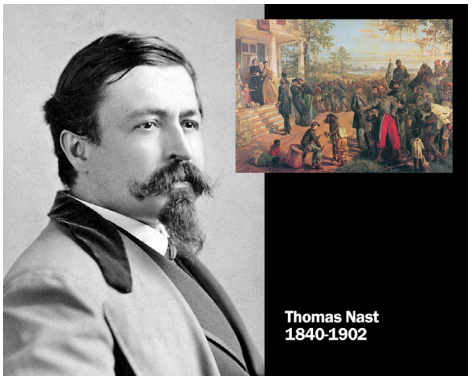
Harper's Magazine 1883

In 1850 Harper's initiated the era of the pictorial magazine when they began publication of Harper's New Monthly Magazine. It serialized English fiction and had numerous woodcuts created for each edition.

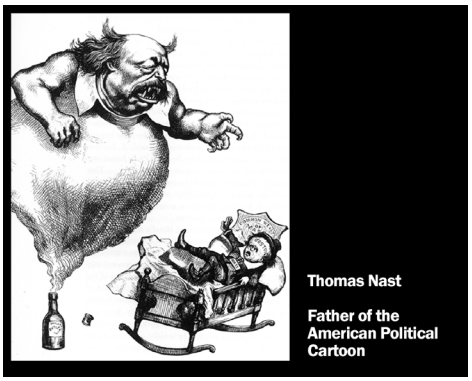


Then in 1857 they added a new publication: Harper's Weekly, which functioned as a news magazine. In 1867 they added a women's magazine, Harper's Bazzar and in 1879, Harper's Young People.

The Harper's developed an elaborate system of labor to produce the many woodcuts needed for their magazines, and their artists included the talented and famous Thomas Nast.



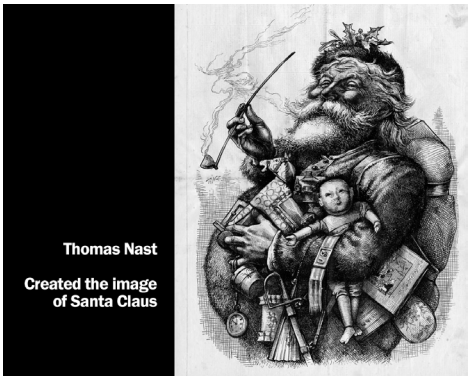
Harper's hired Nast when he was 22 to make battlefield sketches during the civil war and his work was so powerful that Abe Lincoln declared him "the best recruiting Sargent" and U.S. Grant said that Nast had done as much as anyone to bring the conflict to an end.



After the war, Nast stayed on with Harpers and drew his images directly onto the woodblocks in reverse before handing them off to the cutters.

Nast was deeply political and he stripped away detail and introduced more symbolism in order to achieve more effective communication.

He has been called the father of American Political Cartooning.



Thomas Nast

Created the image of Santa Claus

The symbols that Nast popularized and focused on are some of the most important symbols in society even today: Santa Claus,

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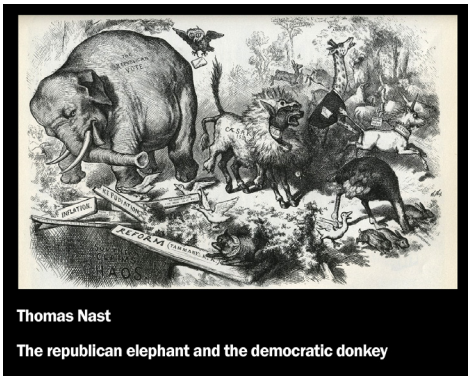


Thomas Nast

The republican elephant and the democratic donkey

The democratic donkey, the Republican elephant...

Thomas Nast

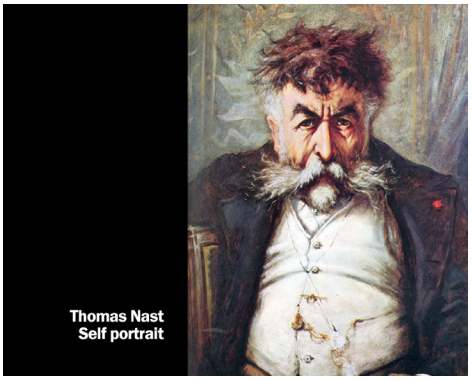
Uncle Sam

Uncle Sam and Columbia (which became the prototype for the statue of liberty).

Thomas Nast - Tammany Tiger

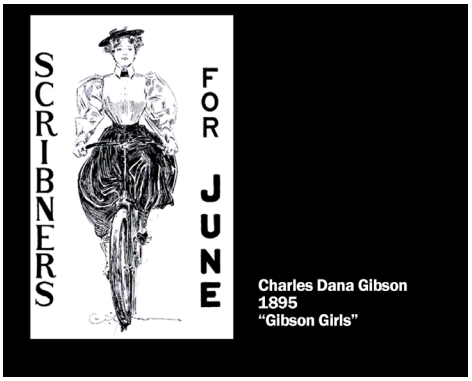
The potential of political cartooning became evident when Nast took on the corrupt William Tweed from Tammany Hall.

Tweed declared that he didn't care what the papers wrote because the voters couldn't read, but "they sure could see them damn pictures." On election day Nast published "Tammany Tiger"... Tweed lost.



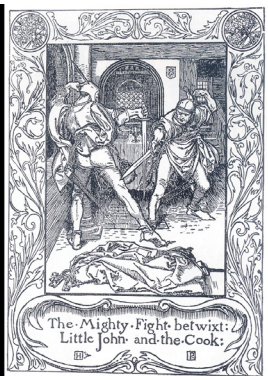
Thomas Nast
Self portrait

When Fletcher Harper died in 1877, a more conservative staff took over the magazines which led Nast to declare: “Policy always strangles individuals.” And left. Theodore Roosevelt appointed him Consul General to Ecuador. Nast died of yellow fever six months later.



Charles Dana Gibson
1895
“Gibson Girls”

Harpers hired Charles Gibson as an illustrator who created the beautiful young women and square jawed men that endured for decades in the Victorian era.

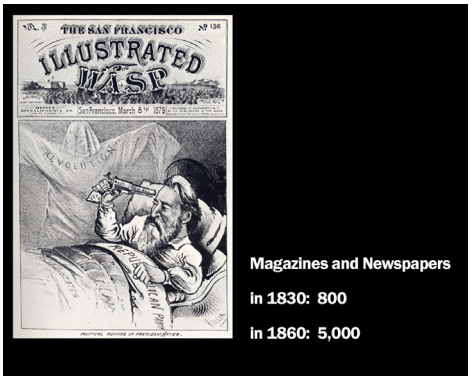


Howard Pyle
The Merry Adventures
of Robin Hood 1883

Howard Pyle also was employed by Harpers, whose tremendous visual talent and gifts as a teacher, launched the golden age of American illustration 1890-1940... When visual communications were entirely dominated by the illustrator.

Pyle published over 3,300 illustrations and inspired a younger generation to move forward with realism in graphic design. The new photographic technologies evolved along with Pyles career.

In 1887 Pyle was 34 and received his first commission for a tonal illustration. The new technology allowed the conversions of the blacks and whites and grays to be reproduced, heralding the end of pen and ink illustration.



The rising tide of literacy, plunging production costs and the growth of advertising revenues pushed the number of magazines and newspapers published from 800 in 1830 to over 5,000 in 1860.

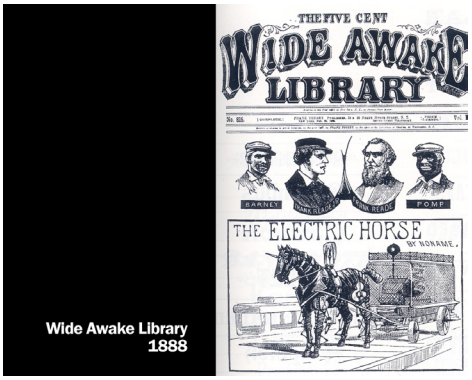
In the 1870s magazines were used extensively for advertising... Which caused lower prices for readers, which in turn boosted circulation.

In 1841 Voleny Palmer of Philadelphia opened what is considered to be the first advertising agency. He sold space for magazine publishers very similar to how travel agents do, for a 25% commission.

In 1875 NW Ayers opened another agency and also began offering consulting services as well as copy writing. Towards the end of the century he offered the full spectrum of services.

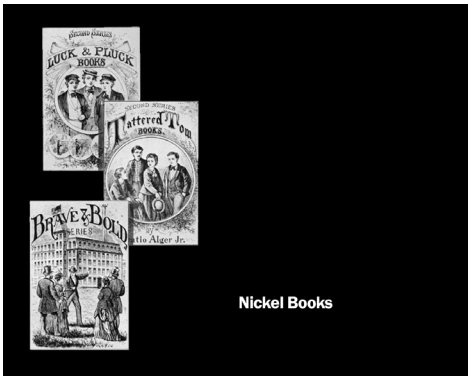
Many of the conventions of advertising were developed in the last two decades of the century.

Advertisements from this period demonstrate these techniques.



In 1877 a new graphic format was launched by the Pictorial Printing Company in Chicago: the Nickel Library.

Short bits of fiction, illustrated with action filled covers became very popular.

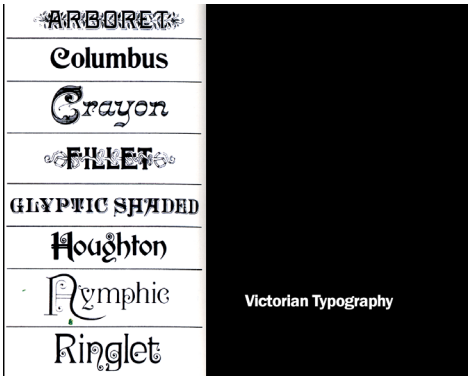


VICTORIAN TYPOGRAPHY

As the Victorian age progressed, the ornate elaboration became of major influence on typography.

The advances in the industrials revolution allowed type to be distorted to an extreme degree.

Punch cutters could now cut their designs in soft metal, then electroplate it to make a hard punch able to stamp the design in the matrix.



Chromolithography, with its uninhibited lettering, was a major source of inspiration to type foundries.

Outlandish and fantasy lettering enjoyed a great popularity during the Victorian era and reflects their love of ornamentation and complexity.

Popular graphics of the Victorian era stemmed not from a design philosophy or artistic convictions, but from prevalent attitudes and sensibilities of the period.