

PLIMPTON PRESS

PAPERS, 1905-1981, n.d.

MSS #3  
Vol.: 3 boxes, 1 oversize fldr.

Processed by: Jane E. Ward  
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Provenance: Although a few items in the collection may have provenance numbers on them, the provenance of the majority of this collection is unknown.

Conservation: Newspaper clippings have been photocopied onto acid-free paper; in some cases the original clippings have been discarded due to their condition. Photographs have been placed in plastic mylar sleeves.

Copyright: Requests for permission to publish material from this collection must be submitted in writing to the Executive Director of the Norwood Historical Society.

HISTORICAL SKETCH

The Plimpton Press was originally established in Boston, Mass., in 1882 by Herbert M. Plimpton, but moved to Norwood, Mass., in 1897. By 1920, the bindery part of the plant was capable of producing 50,000 volumes daily. By 1936, the press employed over 600 men and women. Like the Norwood Press, the Plimpton Press produced textbooks but expanded into religious books, fiction, and deluxe editions to offset the seasonal nature of textbook publishing. In its heyday in the late 1950s, its work force surpassed 1,200 employees and profits were high. Many employees worked for 20 to 30 years for the press.

As early as 1924, the company opened a subsidiary plant in LaPorte, Indiana, to take care of its Midwest clients. This plant was greatly expanded in 1957 and operated at least through 1969.

The Press was active in the social life of Norwood, promoting sports teams among its employees, publishing a company newsletter for many years, and sponsoring social get-togethers for its employees.

The company lost its local control in 1964 when it was purchased by McCall Printing Co. of New York. In 1970 the New York investment firm Murray Traub Acquiring Corp. bought the Plimpton Press and ran it until it closed in October 1973. Changes in printing practices, greater competition, and a decline in textbook publishing are all said to have contributed to the firm's ultimate decline.

#### SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The Plimpton Press papers give a glimpse into the workings of the company, although there are few original business records of the company contained here. Box 1, Folder 1 contains legal papers (some of which are copies), most of which refer to the 1913 incorporation of the company with stockholders. Also here is a 1961 petition to the town of Norwood to close portions of several streets around the plant in order to accommodate plant expansion.

The financial papers (B1, F2) date from 1908-10 and consist primarily of financial statements as of Jan. 31, 1909 and Jan. 31, 1910.

Items produced by the Plimpton Press include the Year Book of the Plimpton Press, 1911 (B1, F3), a sample book containing samples of typeface and bindings, possibly of all the volumes produced by the company in 1911. This appears to be the only time such a volume was produced. Other items printed by the Press include newsletters published by the company; and 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary booklets. There is a consistent run of newsletters through 1946 and 1947, but only scattered issues in the mid-1950s and 1960s (B1, F4-5). Also here are programs and clippings about the "Press Capades," a musical show put on by employees from 1948-51 (B1, F6). There are multiple copies of leaflets and booklets relating to the company's 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1957 (B1, F7).

The collection contains numerous photographs, beginning with an album of photographs of the pressroom, probably done in 1909 (OS Box 3). Photographs of the exterior of the plant range from 1905(?) to a series done in 1961 of the removal of a press machine from the building (B1 F8). Included in this folder are 1922 aerial views of the plant. Box 1, Folder 9 contains more photos of the press removal in 1961. Undated

photos of the plant exterior will be found in Box 2, Folder 1. Photographs of employees and the plant interior will be found in Box 2, Folder 2 (1906-59, n.d.) and OS Box 3, Folder 1 (1906, 1930s?, n.d.).

Photographs of Plimpton Press employees at social gatherings include the 1958 Christmas party (B2 F3), and the 40-year employee parties in 1964 and 1965 (B2 F4), and in 1966 and 1967 (B2 F5). Employees with 40-50 years of service were honored at these events. Many of the people in these photos are identified on the backs of the photographs.

More miscellaneous items include a 1924 photo of the LaPorte, Ind., plant and information on the 1957 expansion of that plant (B2 F6); a folder of clippings about the company and its employees, 1905-81 (B2 F7); a folder of clippings about the book and printing industry in general, 1930-65 (B2 F8); a folder of 1966 correspondence re: reprinting an item in the company newsletter (B2 F9); and a folder of miscellaneous items found in the collection, including several copies of a guide "Your Visit at Plimpton Press," and a July 27, 1946 issue of the [Boston] Braves Bulletin (B2 F10).

### CONTENTS LIST

#### Box Folder

1	1	Legal papers, 1912-13, 1961.
	2	Financial papers, 1908-10, n.d.
	3	<u>Year Book of the Plimpton Press</u> , 1911.
	4	Newsletters, 1945-47, 1954.
	5	Newsletters, 1955-71.
	6	"Press Capades," 1948, 1951.
	7	75 <sup>th</sup> anniversary leaflets and booklets, 1957.

#### Oversize Box

	3	Plimpton Press Press Room photograph album, 1909(?).
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#### Box Folder

1	8	Photographs: plant exterior, 1905(?), 1918, 1922, 1961.
	9	Photographs: removal of press machine, 1961.
2	1	Photographs: plant exterior, n.d.
	2	Photographs: employees and plant interior, 1906, 1915, 1937, 1953, 1959, n.d.

#### Oversize Box

3	<u>Folder</u> 1	Oversize photographs: employees and plant interior, 1906, 1930s?
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Box Folder

2	3	Photographs: 1958 Christmas party.
	4	Photographs: 40-year parties, 1964-65.
	5	Photographs: 40-year parties, 1966-67.
	6	LaPorte, Ind., plant: 1924 photo, 1957 expansion information.
	7	Clippings re: history of company and employees, 1905-81.
	8	Clippings re: book and printing industry, 1930-65.
	9	Correspondence re: reprinting article in company newsletter, 1966.
	10	Miscellaneous items.