

Printers of Michigan's Capital Cities:  
Newspaper Magnates & State Printing In Detroit and Lansing

Abstract

A printing press first reached Detroit in 1785, but it was not until 1808 that materials were actively printed. In Michigan's 1835 Constitution, the need for a state legislative printer was established. This essay explores the complex connection between the Michigan State Legislature and partisan newspaper publishers in Michigan's capital cities, Detroit and Lansing, throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. While most frequently selected by lowest sealed bid to the legislature, the state printer was once popularly elected. The resources in MSU Rare Books and Special Collections were the primary sources for this research.

HST 475: History of the Book  
Professor Brockey  
Fall 2016

The vast topic of the history of the book is rich with a variety of subtopics. Governmental printing which hinges largely on record-keeping for states and municipalities is an important and often overlooked aspect of book and print history. The State of Michigan has a fascinating story to tell on the topic and this study follows printing in the region from its earliest settlers, through statehood, print's movement from Detroit to Lansing along with the change in the seat of government, and the various methods by which Michigan employed official state printers throughout the nineteenth century. Throughout, the relationship of the Detroit and Lansing's early newspaper publishers to the state legislature and the state printing contract is also explored, supported by the resources and collections available in the Michigan State University Library's Rare Books and Special Collections.

#### EARLY SETTLEMENT & PIONEER PRINTERS

The first European men to see present-day Michigan were French explorers who arrived in the northern parts of the state, near Sault Ste. Marie, circa 1620. The French, just as many had done before, were moving westward in an attempt to find a water route through the continent in order to reach the Indies. The French established a permanent settlement within about forty years of discovering the region. Shortly, explorer Antoine de la Mothe Cadillac and his party of soldiers and workmen founded a new French colony on the river in 1701, the settlement would later be known as Detroit.<sup>1</sup>

Nearly a century passed before a printing press reached Detroit. In 1785, Alexander and William Macomb ordered a press from London. Along with the press, the Macomb brothers ordered English and Great Primer roman typefaces from William Caslon's catalog. Caslon was a

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<sup>1</sup> Willis F. Dunbar, *Michigan: A History of the Wolverine State* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1970), 47-71, 83.

well-known English printer and typefounder. The Macombs had one large oversight in their printing press order – nobody in Detroit knew the art of printing. This lack of knowledge stymied Detroit’s first press. The press, unused for many years, was eventually sold by the Macomb brothers to John Askin. It then made its way to James May, who engaged a Canadian printer, John McCall, for his printing skills in the summer of 1796. Shortly thereafter, in 1800, May sold Detroit’s first and only printing press to Silvester Tiffany of Niagara, Canada, sparking an era without print in Detroit.<sup>2</sup>

In 1808, Reverend Father Gabriel Richard decided that Detroit needed to print its own materials and its reliance on scribes, imported books and town criers only hindered the city’s forward progress. Richard brought a small Ramage press to Detroit after a trip to the East. The press’s original purpose was to print devotional works for the French-speaking population of Detroit. Richard also brought a printer from Utica, New York, James Miller, to operate the press. Miller started Detroit’s first newspaper, the *Michigan Essay*. Later, during the War of 1812, the press, then-operated by Aaron Coxshaw, served the American and British administrative and military needs for printing. After the war, Coxshaw’s apprentice, Detroit’s first native printer, Theophilus Mettez, took over operation of the press until 1817.<sup>3</sup>

Miller’s 1809 newspaper was the first printed in Michigan. Father Richard’s press introduced the region to the art of printing and the materials printed on it, like Miller’s newspaper, ignited a printing culture in the state by showing the possibilities of a local printing press for spreading news, the large production of religious texts, and an array of other uses. The *Detroit Gazette*, published by John P. Sheldon and Ebenezer Reed, was founded in 1817. Since

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<sup>2</sup> Garnett McCoy, *Printers and Presses in Early Detroit* (Detroit: Junto Private Press, 1962), 1-3, Michigan State University Main Library.

<sup>3</sup> McCoy, *Printers and Presses*, 3-7.

then, there has been continual printing throughout the region, largely in the form of newspapers, though books and many other print materials were produced. Throughout the 1820s and 1830s, nine different newspapers were published in Detroit – one being the *Democratic Free Press and Michigan Intelligencer*, which is the “lineal ancestor” of the current *Detroit Free Press*. During those two decades, approximately a dozen newspapers were established throughout the state in towns such as Monroe, Ann Arbor, Pontiac, Kalamazoo, and others. The motivation of printers to establish newspapers throughout the state was the ever-growing population, which was sparked by the opening of the Erie Canal in 1825.<sup>4</sup> The printers were not alone in recognizing the population increase throughout the 1820s and 1830s, the territorial government had also been paying attention.

#### MICHIGAN JOINS THE UNION & EARLY STATE PRINTERS

By the early 1830s, the Michigan Territory had gained enough residents to be eligible for statehood. In 1833, Michigan was authorized by Congress to hold a constitutional convention. The convention convened in May 1835 and the state’s first constitution was drafted. In October, voters approved the proposed constitution that had been drafted. Several years passed, however, until Michigan was admitted to the Union. President Andrew Jackson would not approve Michigan as a state until the boundary conflict between Michigan and Ohio was resolved. In 1836 Michigan agreed to give up the Toledo strip in exchange for the Upper Peninsula, which proved to be rich in natural resources. President Jackson approved the solution to the boundary conflict and on January 26, 1837 signed the bill that made Michigan the twenty-sixth state.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Dunbar, *Michigan*, 291-293.

Clarence M. Burton, ed., William Stocking, ed., Gordon K. Miller, ed., *The City of Detroit Michigan* (Detroit: S.J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1922), 794-827.

<sup>5</sup> Dunbar, *Michigan*, 301-316.

Starting with the Constitutional Convention in 1835, the government saw the need for an official printer to the state. In the period from 1835 through 1842 the state printer was appointed by the Legislature.<sup>6</sup> A book in the collection of MSU Rare Books and Special Collections dates to 1835 and was “printed by order of the convention” by Sheldon McKnight. The 1835 McKnight book was the “Appeal by the Convention of Michigan to the People of the United States: with other Documents, in relation to the Boundary Question, between Michigan and Ohio.” The book contains the debates from the 1835 Constitutional Convention regarding the border with Ohio, mostly concerning the Toledo strip.<sup>7</sup> Also in the back of the book is the Constitution that was drafted at the Convention. Because of its contents, the book was likely published after the convention concluded and the information was compiled. The volume in MSU’s collection belonged to Caleb F. Davis, an early statesman and Detroit resident whose name is written across the title page.<sup>8</sup> It was donated in 1873 to the State Agricultural College Library by W.S. George, a prominent Lansing resident who later became a printer to the state.

Sheldon McKnight, the printer of the 1835 convention book, was a nephew of John P. Sheldon, the founding publisher of the *Detroit Gazette* in 1817. McKnight was the publisher and editor of the *Democratic Free Press and Michigan Intelligencer*, which eventually became the *Detroit Free Press*.<sup>9</sup> McKnight’s status in the Michigan newspaper industry clearly made him a stand-out in the world of printing because of his experience and knowledge of the press. The

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<sup>6</sup> Wiley J. Williams, "The Years of a Popularly Elected Public Printer in Michigan, 1850-1851," *Journal of Library History* 5, no. 3 (1970): 257, <http://ezproxy.msu.edu.proxy2.cl.msu.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.proxy2.cl.msu.edu/docview/1307337107?accountid=12598>.

<sup>7</sup> “Appeal by the Convention of Michigan to the People of the United States: with other Documents, in relation to the Boundary Question, between Michigan and Ohio” (Detroit: Sheldon M’Knight, 1835). Michigan State University Rare Books and Special Collections (XX F572.B7 M6 1835).

<sup>8</sup> Burton, Stocking, Miller, *The City of Detroit*, 1510.

<sup>9</sup> Burton, Stocking, Miller, *The City of Detroit*, 812-813.

selection of McKnight to publish a work for the 1835 Constitutional Convention led to a long line of newspaper proprietors as printers to the state. In a 1970 article on Michigan state printers, Wiley Williams, a historian and professor of library science, asserted:

All of the chosen printers, it should be noted, were editors and/or publishers of partisan newspapers, and obtaining the state's printing contract was patronage. In return, the printers used their papers as vehicles for espousing and defending the views of the party or faction in office and for furiously attacking the arguments of opponents.<sup>10</sup>

From 1836 through 1839, John S. Bagg was the printer to the state as appointed by the Legislature.<sup>11</sup> The *Democratic Free Press and Michigan Intelligencer*, which had gone daily in 1835 and been changed to the *Detroit Daily Free Press*, was purchased by Bagg and L. Legrand Morse from Sheldon McKnight in 1836. By 1837, however, Bagg was the sole owner. After a devastating fire, John Bagg and his brother Asahel became partners. John left the *Free Press* partnership in 1840.<sup>12</sup> In 1841, Asahel Bagg was joined by John H. Harmon, one-time editor of the newspaper, as partial owner.<sup>13</sup>

After 1842 the state changed the method by which the state printer was selected. The state "advertised for sealed bids and awarded the contract to the lowest responsible bidder." The bidding system lasted until 1849.<sup>14</sup> Annually, the state Legislature published the "Manual, Containing the Rules of the Senate and House of Representatives, of the State of Michigan, and Joint Rules of the Two Houses, and other matter" which would have been, in most cases,

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<sup>10</sup> Williams, "Popularly Elected Public Printer," 257.

<sup>11</sup> Williams, "Popularly Elected Public Printer," 258.

<sup>12</sup> Burton, Stocking, Miller, *The City of Detroit*, 812-813.

<sup>13</sup> Z.L. White, "Western Journalism," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 77, no. 461 (1888): 690, <https://books.google.com/books?id=PncCAAAIAAJ&pg=PA690#v=onepage&q&f=false>.

<sup>14</sup> Williams, "Popularly Elected Public Printer," 257.

property of state representatives and senators for each respective year. Tracking the printer of the annually published “Manual” eases the process of identifying the printer to the state.

In 1842, Asahel Bagg and John Harmon were contracted as printer to the state. They again received the contract, 1844-1848. In 1847, John Bagg returned to the *Free Press* and the partnership with his brother and Harmon. As printer to the state, the Bagg and Harmon firm printed several editions of the “Manual.”<sup>15</sup> Bagg and Harmon’s 1847 “Manual,” a copy which belonged to C.P. Bush, a state senator from Livingston County, is among the Rare Books in MSU’s Special Collections. Printed in Detroit, the book contains a copy of the state constitution, rosters of the state Legislature, and various other information vital to Michigan’s state representatives and senators.<sup>16</sup> The “Manual” accompanies the 1847 “Acts of the Legislature of the State of Michigan, Passed at the Annual Session of 1847, with an Appendix. Containing the State Treasurer’s Annual Report, &c.,” also printed by Bagg and Harmon in Detroit under their 1847 contract. The 1847 “Acts of the Legislature” book in MSU’s collection belonged to Henry Chamberlain, the founder of Three Oaks, Michigan and state representative from Berrien County in 1847. The edition contains acts of the 1847 state legislature and the laws of the state of Michigan. It would have been not only a record book of the acts passed in 1847 but also a reference guide to the state’s legislators and executives. Chamberlain’s copy, housed in MSU Special Collections, likely came to Michigan State in 1952 when the museum in Three Oaks, Michigan was entirely gifted to the Michigan State Museum. The Three Oaks museum was housed in Chamberlain’s home and held all of his personal effects, there are other books in MSU Special Collections with his name inscribed, which indicate that they came directly from him,

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<sup>15</sup> Williams, “Popularly Elected Public Printer,” 266.

<sup>16</sup> “Manual, Containing the Rules of the Senate and House of Representatives, of the State of Michigan, and Joint Rules of the Two Houses, and other matter” (Detroit: Bagg and Harmon, 1847). Michigan State University Rare Books and Special Collections (JK5830 .A15).

likely through the Three Oaks acquisition.<sup>17</sup> Chamberlain would have had many copies of state legislative Manuals and the Acts of the state legislature, as he was heavily involved in the early state government. The state government had a lot on their plate in 1847, as that was the year when a major decision about the seat of state government was made.

## A NEW CAPITAL & MIGRATING PRINTERS

The 1835 Constitution of the State of Michigan, Article 12, Section 9, stated “The seat of government for this state shall be at Detroit, or at such other place or places as may be prescribed by law, until the year 1847, when it shall be permanently located by the legislature.”<sup>18</sup> When the 1847 legislature convened, the topic of the state capital was at the center of discussion. There were many suggestions for the permanent state capital while the topic was under immense discussion, including Marshall, Jackson, and Ann Arbor. However, those cities were aggressively campaigning to be the seat of government. Marshall went so far as to build a home for the governor. The decision was made to locate the state capital in the entirely undeveloped and inaccessible township of Lansing. The key benefit of Lansing was its central location and that none of the campaigning cities would be antagonized by the decision. Even with Lansing’s undeveloped state, the Legislature saw its positives as outweighing its negatives and passed the bill designating Lansing as the permanent state capital.<sup>19</sup> Governor William Greenly signed the bill on March 16, 1847 designating the state capital’s permanent location as the Township of Lansing.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Lynne Swanson and Val Berryman, “Chamberlain Memorial Museum Collections Gifted to Michigan State College Museum,” *MSU Museum*, 2009, <http://museum.msu.edu/?q=node/405>.

<sup>18</sup> *Lansing and Its Yesterdays* (Lansing: The State Journal Company, 1930), 12.

<sup>19</sup> Dunbar, *Michigan*, 391.

<sup>20</sup> *Lansing and Its Yesterdays*, 14.

Lansing was entirely wilderness when it was chosen as the capital, so the proposition of building new infrastructure immediately was difficult. A temporary building was not constructed until December 1847. The new capital city did not even receive the name “Lansing” until extensive debate by the state legislature in 1848. Throughout 1847 and 1848, the city was known as “Michigan,” though it was located in the township of Lansing.<sup>21</sup> The transition of the seat of government was rough, not only for the state government, but also for the state’s printers.<sup>22</sup>

Because the state printer had been established for many years in Detroit and there were no printers in Lansing, someone with knowledge and equipment of printing would need to move to the new capital city. However, the proposition of moving so quickly was not feasible, especially since the printer to the state at the time, Bagg and Harmon, were also publishing Detroit’s *Free Press* newspaper. The 1848 “Manual,” the subsequent edition to the 1847 book, was still printed in Detroit by Bagg and Harmon while the seat of government was transitioning to Lansing.<sup>23</sup>

In 1848 the first newspaper was printed in the new state capital. The Lansing *Free Press* was first printed on January 11, 1848. Bagg and Harmon, the publishers of Detroit’s *Free Press* and printers to the state, were the printers of the first Lansing paper.<sup>24</sup> Bagg and Harmon’s work in Lansing was likely an attempt to save their contract with the state and display their dominance in printing throughout the region. That attempt may have been in vain, as the 1849 legislature put significant debate into the 1849 state printing contract and Bagg and Harmon were not the sole bidders.

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<sup>21</sup> Dunbar, *Michigan*, 391.

<sup>22</sup> Dunbar, *Michigan*, 389.

<sup>23</sup> “Manual, Containing the Rules of the Senate and House of Representatives, of the State of Michigan, and Joint Rules of the Two Houses, and other matter” (Detroit: Bagg and Harmon, 1848). Michigan State University Rare Books and Special Collections (JK5830 .A15).

<sup>24</sup> *Lansing and Its Yesterdays*, 26.

Munger and Pattison, the founders of the *Detroit Commercial Bulletin* in 1848, submitted their bid for state printer in 1849. Their primary competition was Bagg and Harmon, who had held the contract for several years. The legislature, who had clear opinions about the state printer because of the printers' political stance and influence on the general public through their newspaper publications, debated their options for 1849 printer. A legislator submitted Bagg and Harmon's "lowest bid" for the contract, which was an attempt to undercut Munger and Pattison's bid. After a significant debate, and the widespread feeling that Bagg and Harmon had too long been supported by the state, the legislature passed the bill "granting Munger & Pattison the rate it had requested."<sup>25</sup> After Munger and Pattison were given the contract, John S. Bagg left the Bagg and Harmon partnership. Munger and Pattison printed for the state in 1849 and had also purchased the *Michigan State Journal* in Lansing from John H. Harmon, as Harmon no longer had an interest in Lansing without the state printing contract. Munger and Pattison's proprietorship of the Lansing paper continued the longstanding tradition of the printer to the state as a newspaper publisher.<sup>26</sup>

The 1849 "Manual," printed by Munger and Pattison, is in the collection of MSU's Rare Books and Special Collections. This edition of the "Manual" was printed in Detroit while the legislature convened in Lansing, presumably due to the legislature's lack of familiarity with Lansing press and the printing scale which could not yet be met by a Lansing printer. MSU's copy of the 1849 edition was property of Henry Chamberlain, a state representative from Berrien County, as his name is embossed on the cover. Munger and Pattison, as state printers, also

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<sup>25</sup> Williams, "Popularly Elected Public Printer," 258-259.

<sup>26</sup> Douglas C. McMurtrie, *Early Printing in Michigan, With a Bibliography of the Issues of the Michigan Press, 1796-1850* (Chicago: John Calhoun Club, 1931), 291, Michigan State University Rare Books and Special Collections (Z209.M59 M2 1931a).

Williams, "Popularly Elected Public Printer," 266.

printed the “Acts of the Legislature of the State of Michigan, Passed at the Annual Session of 1849, with an Appendix. Containing the State Treasurer’s Annual Report, &c.” The 1849 “Acts of the Legislature” book in MSU’s collection has various marks of ownership, including the names of A.M. Brownell, dated 1849, and G.M. Valentine. MSU acquired the book in 1962 according to a note written inside.<sup>27</sup> The Munger & Pattison vs. Bagg & Harmon bidding conflict of 1848 with the state legislature led some to propose the idea of a popularly elected printer to the state – an idea which came under serious debate the following year.

#### AN ELECTED STATE PRINTER & CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION

While Munger and Pattison began the printing contract early in 1849, the state legislature had great debate after granting the contract. Both houses of the state legislature discussed the undercutting of bids which result in desperately low contracts which ultimately hurt the contractor’s business. The particularly difficult situation between Munger & Pattison and Bagg & Harmon in 1848 resulted in a debate over whether the bidding system was most appropriate or an alternative option would be best for employing a printer to the state. The state legislature, after extensive debate, passed a bill calling for the election of a state printer to be held every other year and setting the rate of pay to the printer, thus eliminating the bidding system. The first election for state printer was scheduled for November 1849.<sup>28</sup>

As a result, for the 1849 election, in addition to nominating gubernatorial candidates, each party also nominated a candidate for state printer. The Whig-Free Soil Party (a coalition formed between the established Whigs and the Free Soil third party, a movement which included Democrats who sought change and were considered radical) nominated Hubbard H. Duncklee

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<sup>27</sup> “Acts of the Legislature of the State of Michigan, Passed at the Annual Sessions of 1849, with an Appendix. Containing the State Treasurer’s Annual Report, &c.” (Lansing: Munger & Pattison, 1849), Michigan State University Rare Books and Special Collections (KFM4225 .A3 1849).

<sup>28</sup> Williams, “Popularly Elected Public Printer,” 258-260.

for printer to the state. Duncklee was the publisher of the *Detroit Daily Advertiser*. The Democratic Party nominated Rensselaer W. Ingals for state printer. Ingals was the publisher of the *Adrian Watchtower* and a pioneer printer in Lenawee County, Michigan. Also on the ballot for 1849 was the question of a constitutional convention, which had been on the table for a while.<sup>29</sup>

A point of note in MSU's Special Collections lies within the aforementioned 1848 Legislative "Manual." Throughout the edition, many newspaper clippings are pasted and notes are penciled. Inside the back cover is a small flyer which lists the Democratic Ticket for the 1849 state ballot. The list includes Rensselaer W. Ingals for state printer. The hierarchy of the list is telling of the importance of the state printer, Ingals is listed just beneath the candidates for governor and lieutenant governor. The "Manual" into which the flyer is pasted also includes many penciled notes. A note that reads "printing" is written next to the list of standing legislative committees, which includes "a committee of printing."<sup>30</sup> The newspaper clippings and notes included indicate that perhaps the book belonged to a state legislator who sat on the printing committee. The inclusion of materials relating to the 1849 election in the 1848 "Manual" also indicates that perhaps the book belonged to a legislator who held office in 1848 but not in 1849.

The 1849 election resulted in Rensselaer W. Ingals' election to the post of printer to the state. Additionally, the voters of the State of Michigan voted in favor of a Constitutional Convention.<sup>31</sup> After his election, Ingals, in addition to his role as publisher of the democratic *Adrian Watchtower*, purchased the *Michigan State Journal* in Lansing in 1850 from the firm

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<sup>29</sup> Williams, "Popularly Elected Public Printer," 261-264.

<sup>30</sup> "Manual, Containing the Rules of the Senate and House of Representatives, of the State of Michigan, and Joint Rules of the Two Houses, and other matter" (Detroit: Bagg and Harmon, 1848). Michigan State University Rare Books and Special Collections (JK5830 .A15).

<sup>31</sup> Williams, "Popularly Elected Public Printer," 264-265.

Munger and Pattison, the previous printer to the state. Ingals' purchase of the Lansing paper established his presence in the city as a printer and continued the tradition of newspaper proprietors as printer to the state. After his election, Ingals brought the first steam printing presses to Lansing, which were presumably used for both his newspaper and state printing.<sup>32</sup>

Ingals' election to the post of state printer and the call for a convention by voters in 1849 made for the perfect match. Ingals began his two-year-term as state printer in January 1850. Among the materials Ingals printed for the state was the "Journal of the Constitutional Convention of the State of Michigan" of 1850. Ingals printed the book in Lansing, one of the first printings for the state done in the new capital city, likely due to the steam presses Ingals had introduced to the city. The edition of the 1850 convention journal in MSU's collection has been in the library since at least the 1870s as proven by its Michigan State Agricultural College Library book plates, stamps, and notes. The title page of the book also notes "Printed by order of the Convention, under the supervision of John Swegles, Jr., Principal Secretary of the Convention." The book follows the format of a standard journal, each section begins with a date, time, and place and goes on to detail the discussions of the day. It is likely that the book was published using minutes and notes from the convention. The 1850 Constitutional Convention also covered issues concerning state printing.

"The delegates [to the state constitutional convention] met at Lansing on the first Monday in June, 1850, and drew up a new constitution which was adopted by the voters in November of that year."<sup>33</sup> Delegates to the convention had state printing on their mind while drafting the new constitution. Article 4, Section 22 of the 1850 state constitution read as follows:

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<sup>32</sup> Williams, "Popularly Elected Public Printer," 266.  
McMurtrie, *Early Printing in Michigan*, 291.

<sup>33</sup> Ferris E. Lewis, *My State and Its Story* (Hillsdale, Michigan: Hillsdale School Supply Company, 1950), 227.

The legislature shall provide by law that furnishing of fuel and stationery for the use of the state, the printing and binding the laws and journals, all blanks, paper and printing for the executive departments, and all other printing ordered by the legislature, shall be let by contract to the lowest bidder or bidders, who shall give adequate and satisfactory security for the performance thereof. The legislature shall prescribe by law the manner in which the state printing shall be executed, and the accounts rendered therefor; and shall prohibit all charges for constructive labor. They shall not rescind nor alter such contract, nor release the person or persons taking the same, or his or their sureties, from the performance of any of the conditions of the contract. No member of the legislature nor officer of the state, shall be interested directly or indirectly in any such contract.<sup>34</sup>

Ingals' position as printer to the state was held for two years, which he had commenced in 1850. Ingals finished his two-year-term as state printer even with the decision by the Legislature to eliminate the election system in favor of the bidding system which had been the norm prior to 1849. Over the course of his two years in office, Ingals' firm printed many volumes and documents for the state. Ingals' 1851 "Acts of the Legislature of the State of Michigan, Passed at the Annual Session of 1851, with an Appendix. Containing the State Treasurer's Annual Report, &c.," includes the recently revised state constitution, resolutions and act of the state legislature, and the laws of the state. The 1851 edition, like its 1847 and 1849 predecessors in MSU's collection, would likely have been property of a state official. The 1851 copy was, at one time, property of the Michigan State Law Library, but has no apparent provenance prior to its acquisition by the library.<sup>35</sup>

At the end of 1851, R.W. Ingals' term as Michigan's only popularly elected state printer came to an end. Starting in 1852 the state printer was selected by the terms presented in the 1850

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<sup>34</sup> "Constitution of Michigan of 1850," *legislature.mi.gov*, accessed December 1, 2016, <http://www.legislature.mi.gov/documents/historical/miconstitution1850.htm>.

<sup>35</sup> "Acts of the Legislature of the State of Michigan, Passed at the Annual Sessions of 1851, with an Appendix. Containing the State Treasurer's Annual Report, &c." (Lansing: R.W. Ingals, 1851), Michigan State University Rare Books and Special Collections (KFM4225 .A3 1849).

constitution, the lowest capable bidder would receive the contract. Ingals had a natural edge, having been the state printer for the prior two years. The 1851 Legislature was tasked with receiving bids and naming the printer to the state for 1852. Ingals received the state printing contract for 1852.<sup>36</sup> During that year, the *Michigan State Journal*, Lansing's democratic paper, got a new owner, George Washington Peck.<sup>37</sup> With Peck's ownership of the *Michigan State Journal*, he put in a bid for state printer for 1853 – Peck received the state printing contract. For 1853, Geo. W. Peck printed the Legislative "Manual," which mirrored its predecessors as a guide to the state's legislators, including the state constitution, standing committees, rosters of the legislature, and more. The 1853 "Manual" in MSU's collection was property of Henry Chamberlain, like many of the other aforementioned Legislative books, the edition is also signed by Michigan's Secretary of State William Graves. There was an addition to the 1853 "Manual" which added a useful aspect to the book. This copy has two fold out maps included. In the front of the book is a map which shows the layout of the Senate Chambers in the state capitol including the senators' names. In the back of the book is a map showing the layout of the Committee Room in the state capitol.<sup>38</sup> This addition not only made the books more useful to the Legislature but also emphasized the competency of the state printer.

One noteworthy change throughout the years with the respect to the Legislative "Manual" printed annually is its size. The evolution of size shown through MSU Rare Books and Special Collections' collection of the Michigan Legislative "Manuals" mirrors the growth throughout the state. The state's growth throughout the 1840s and 1850s correlates directly to the growth in size

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<sup>36</sup> Williams, "Popularly Elected Public Printer," 226.

<sup>37</sup> *Lansing and Its Yesterdays*, 27.

<sup>38</sup> "Manual, Containing the Rules of the Senate and House of Representatives, of the State of Michigan, and Joint Rules of the Two Houses, and other matter" (Lansing: Geo. W. Peck, 1853). Michigan State University Rare Books and Special Collections (JK5830 .A15).

of the “Manuals.” As population expands, so too does the amount of representation in the state Legislature. The growing size of the “Manuals” also signifies the persistent importance of the state printer to the Legislature and state government as a whole.

#### A CHANGE IN PARTY CONTROL & A NEW ERA OF PRINTERS

As the need and importance of the state printer persisted, a new era in state government and state printing was sparked by a shift in party control in the state. In 1854, the Republican Party was formed in Jackson, Michigan and the State of Michigan was the first state in the union to nominate a gubernatorial candidate from the new party. Kinsley S. Bingham was nominated for governor in 1854 and won the election, becoming Michigan’s first Republican governor and one of the first Republican governors in the nation.<sup>39</sup>

Henry Barns, an editor of the *Detroit Tribune*, moved to Lansing in 1855 due to Bingham’s election. Barns’ reason for moving to the capital city was to launch a new partisan newspaper in the city, the *State Republican*. With the Republicans’ rise to prominence in the state government came the shift and favoritism toward the Republican press in Lansing and for state printer. By 1857, the state printer was Hosmer and Finch, the then-proprietors of the *State Republican*. The proprietorship of the *State Republican* by Rufus Hosmer and George A. Finch lasted between 1855 and 1857.<sup>40</sup> Hosmer and Finch printed the 1857 Legislative “Manual,” which held the standard contents that its predecessors had, and followed the trend of growth that had been noticeable in every edition. MSU’s copy of the 1857 “Manual” belonged to C.K.

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<sup>39</sup> Dunbar, *Michigan*, 419-424.

<sup>40</sup> Albert E. Cowles, *Past and Present of the City of Lansing and Ingham County, Michigan* (Lansing: The Michigan Historical Publishing Association, 1905), 112.

Carpenter, a state representative from Oakland County, it was donated by his sons to the State Historical Society.<sup>41</sup>

In 1857, George Finch retired and his portion of the business was sold to John A. Kerr, an early Lansing resident, mayor, and wealthy businessman, resulting in the Hosmer and Kerr firm. By 1859, Hosmer and Kerr had received the state printing contract. Their 1859 Legislative “Manual” is among the books in MSU’s Rare Books collection. Like the 1857 edition, this copy belonged to Representative C.K. Carpenter. Both the 1857 Hosmer and Finch “Manual” and the 1859 Hosmer and Kerr “Manual” contain fold-out maps like the 1853 book. The former containing a map of the House of Representatives chamber and the latter with maps of the chambers of both houses of congress. These maps are more elaborate than their 1853 counterpart, including decorative script and the state coat of arms.<sup>42</sup>

Hosmer & Finch and Hosmer & Kerr were the first among many *State Republican* proprietors who held the state printing contract. After Rufus Hosmer’s death in 1861, John A. Kerr maintained the proprietorship of the *State Republican* independently.<sup>43</sup> Throughout the 1860s, Kerr maintained the contract as printer to the state. Kerr printed the 1865 Legislative “Manual,” as nearly every state printer did.<sup>44</sup> But by 1867, the state was up for another constitutional convention due to a provision in the 1850 constitution which required a revision be submitted every sixteen years. Rather than a general revision, the matter was put up for a vote. In

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<sup>41</sup> “Manual, Containing the Rules of the Senate and House of Representatives, of the State of Michigan, and Joint Rules of the Two Houses, and other matter” (Lansing: Hosmer and Finch, 1857). Michigan State University Rare Books and Special Collections (JK5830 .A15).

<sup>42</sup> “Manual, Containing the Rules of the Senate and House of Representatives, of the State of Michigan, and Joint Rules of the Two Houses, and other matter” (Lansing: Hosmer and Kerr, 1859). Michigan State University Rare Books and Special Collections (JK5830 .A15).

<sup>43</sup> Cowles, *Past and Present of the City of Lansing*, 112.

<sup>44</sup> “Manual, Containing the Rules of the Senate and House of Representatives, of the State of Michigan, and Joint Rules of the Two Houses, and other matter” (Lansing: John A. Kerr, 1865). Michigan State University Rare Books and Special Collections (JK5830 .A15).

1866, the voters of the State of Michigan approved a new constitutional convention. The delegates convened in Lansing in May 1867, a new constitution was drafted but rejected. After the constitution was rejected, a Constitutional Commission was formed and offered a revision to the constitution in 1874 which was also rejected. A new constitutional convention for Michigan was not held until 1908.<sup>45</sup>

John A. Kerr, still the printer to the state, printed “The Debates and Proceedings of the Constitutional Convention of the State of Michigan Convened at the City of Lansing, Wednesday, May 15<sup>th</sup>, 1867” in two volumes. The 1867 convention proceedings books is set up like a journal, similar to the aforementioned 1850 constitutional convention journal. Each section is dated and the arguments are set up like dialogue to present the “debates” portion. Included in the volumes is a large section covering the debate of the state printer. A motion was presented in an effort to eliminate the section on printing which had been included in the 1850 convention. After approximately seven pages of debates in Volume 2, the delegates decided to include the printing portion and leave it as it was written in 1850.<sup>46</sup>

The current state capitol building in Lansing was constructed in the 1870s, and an event that momentous would naturally yield a printed publication. By the 1870s, W.S. George, the proprietor of the *State Republican*, was printer and binder to the state.<sup>47</sup> The new title of “binder to the state” was likely added to the printing contract so the legislative publications, which were growing in size, were not only printed but also bound for use by the state Legislature. In 1879, George printed the “Inaugural Proceedings, at the Dedication of the New Capitol of Michigan, at

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<sup>45</sup> Dunbar, *Michigan*, 425-246.

<sup>46</sup> “The Debates and Proceedings of the Constitutional Convention of the State of Michigan Convened at the City of Lansing, Wednesday, May 15th, 1867” (Lansing: John A. Kerr, 1867). Michigan State University Rare Books and Special Collections (JK5825 .A4).

<sup>47</sup> *Lansing and Its Yesterdays*, 31.

the City of Lansing, On the First day of January, 1879.” This publication, which is housed in MSU’s Special Collections, is a pamphlet that George printed under his capacity as state printer. On the title page George does not list himself as the state printer, however. On the reverse of the title page, the resolution that requested the pamphlet’s printing is included. It reads, “the Secretary of the Board of State Building Commissioners be requested to compile and publish, without delay, 3,000 copies of the inaugural proceedings at the Capitol on the first day of January, 1879, for the use of the two Houses.” The state Legislature passed the joint resolution to request the printing by the state printer. Its purpose was, as listed in the resolution, for use by the two houses, as all state printings were.<sup>48</sup> George retained the printing contract until the mid-1880s.

In 1886, Darius Thorp and Frank Godfrey became owners of the *State Republican*.<sup>49</sup> As a result, their firm, Thorp and Godfrey, got the state printing contract. As with their predecessor W.S. George, Thorp and Godfrey were “state printers and binders” implying that they also bound the works they printed for the state. A book printed by Thorp and Godfrey in 1888 was “Historical Collections. Collections and Researches made by the Pioneer and Historical Society of the State of Michigan.” The Pioneer and Historical Society was an early predecessor to the Michigan Historical Commission, which today advises the state Department of Natural Resources and its members are appointed by the governor.<sup>50</sup> As an appointed board that reports to the state, the Pioneer and Historical Society’s publications were printed by the state printer.

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<sup>48</sup> “Inaugural Proceedings, at the Dedication of the New Capitol of Michigan, at the City of Lansing, On the First day of January, 1879” (Lansing: W.S. George, 1879). Michigan State University Rare Books and Special Collections (F574.L2 M5 1879).

<sup>49</sup> *Lansing and Its Yesterdays*, 32.

<sup>50</sup> “Michigan Historical Commission,” *michigan.gov*, accessed December 10, 2016, [http://www.michigan.gov/mhc/0,4726,7-282-65121\\_61084\\_62918---,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/mhc/0,4726,7-282-65121_61084_62918---,00.html).

These “Pioneer Collections” were produced annually for forty years and provide insight into the state printing contract over that period.

Thorp and Godfrey dissolved in the late-1880s with Frank Godfrey’s retirement. The 1889 “Pioneer Collections” were printed by Darius D. Thorp, printer and binder to the state. Thorp retained the contract, he also continued his proprietorship of the *State Republican*.<sup>51</sup> In 1891, Michigan elected its first democratic governor in four decades, Edwin Winans.<sup>52</sup> With Winans’ election came a new state printer, which may have been a deliberate change due to the shift in party power. The Robert Smith Printing Co. of Lansing received the contract in the 1890s and retained it for about a decade. Granting the Smith Co. the printing contract ended the streak of *State Republican* proprietors as state printers, at least temporarily.

Around 1896, the Robert Smith Printing Co. became the owner of the *State Republican*.<sup>53</sup> This revived the tradition of a newspaper publisher as state printer. The Smith Co. remained as state printer through the turn of the twentieth century, and published Lansing’s premier newspaper for many decades following. A new firm, however, received the state printing contract in 1901 – Wynkoop Hallenbeck Crawford Co. The new firm held the contract for well over a decade and presented a change in tradition for the contract. Wynkoop Hallenbeck Crawford Co. did not publish any newspapers, little is actually known about the firm or proprietors other than their work as state printer.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> *Lansing and Its Yesterdays*, 32-33.

<sup>52</sup> George Weeks, *Stewards of the State: The Governors of Michigan* (Ann Arbor: Historical Society of Michigan, 1987), 64.

<sup>53</sup> *Lansing and Its Yesterdays*, 33.

<sup>54</sup> “Michigan Historical Commission, A State Department of History and Archives, Bulletin No. 4, Proceedings of the Michigan Pioneer and Historical Society for 1912 and 1913” (Lansing: Wynkoop Hallenbeck Crawford Co., 1914), <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015071127040;view=1up;seq=3>. “Historical Collections, Collections and Researches made by the Michigan Pioneer and Historical Society, Vol. XXXI,” Michigan Pioneer and Historical Society (Lansing: Wynkoop Hallenbeck Crawford Co., 1902), <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uva.x004332346;view=1up;seq=9>.

Republicans dominated Michigan's state government for seventy-eight years, from 1854 through 1930, and so too did the *State Republican*.<sup>55</sup> In his book *Pioneer Recollections: Semi-Historic Side Lights on the Early Days of Lansing*, Daniel Mevis, a pioneer of the area, noted "the Lansing Weekly State Republican... did the state printing by contract for over 50 years."<sup>56</sup> Mevis's claim is a gross generalization, placing all proprietors of the *State Republican* into one group. However, he is not altogether wrong, in that the majority of state printers in the second half of the nineteenth century were proprietors of the *State Republican*.

The aforementioned 1908 state constitution, which was the first successful revision since the 1850 constitution, retained the section on printing with the same wording as had been drafted in 1850.<sup>57</sup> The history of state printing beyond Wynkoop Hallenbeck Crawford Co. is not clear. The Robert Smith Co. remained publisher of the *State Republican* for several decades after it lost the printing contract, indicating that the dominant local newspaper publishers were no longer involved in state printing after the turn of the century. In 1911, the Smith Co. merged the *State Republican* and the *Lansing Journal*, its democratic counterpart, forming the *State Journal*, which is today the *Lansing State Journal*.<sup>58</sup> The *State Journal* after 1911, then Lansing's dominant newspaper, did not have a particular political affiliation therefore the tradition of the state contract going to a partisan newspaper publisher ceased.

Books printed and bound for the state beginning in the 1920s no longer included a mention of the printer's name. A 1929 book printed for the Michigan Historical Commission

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<sup>55</sup> Dunbar, *Michigan*, 525.

<sup>56</sup> Daniel S. Mevis, *Pioneer Recollections: Semi-Historic Side Lights on the Early Days of Lansing* (Lansing: Robert Smith Printing Company, 1911), 120.

<sup>57</sup> "Constitution of Michigan of 1908," *legislature.mi.gov*, accessed December 1, 2016, <http://www.legislature.mi.gov/documents/historical/miconstitution1908.htm>.

<sup>58</sup> *Lansing and Its Yesterdays*, 34.

includes the state seal, which is a marker in itself.<sup>59</sup> According to the Michigan Department of State, the state seal has not changed since 1911 and the Great Seal Act, which went into effect in 1963, states: “No facsimile or reproduction of the Great Seal can be used in a manner unconnected with official functions of the state.”<sup>60</sup> While the Act came much later than the 1929 book, it can be assumed that use of the state seal was regulated from its inception as it provides an official stamp on anything in which it is printed.

The state of Michigan again held a constitutional convention in 1961 in Lansing. The constitution, which was drafted and approved by 1963, contains no reasonable mention to printing. The absence of a section on printing, as had been included in the 1850 and 1908 constitutions signifies, perhaps, less demand for a state printer in the twentieth century. Legislation and laws were, however, still printed after the 1920s, perhaps just with less direct control by the Legislature and more so through state departments. This was also perhaps a time when the government was less inclined to favor a particular newspaper or printer because of more visibility and the growing immediacy of media.<sup>61</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The history of state printers throughout the nation varies from state to state but offers insight into how Michigan’s story fits into the broader puzzle of print history across the United States. Michigan’s attempt at an elected printer only lasted through one election before the Legislature restored the contract system, but states like Kansas, for instance, were able to sustain an office of the state printer. Kansas had an elected state printer for seventy years, abolishing the

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<sup>59</sup> “Michigan Historical Collections, Vol. XL, Documents Relating to Detroit and Vicinity, 1805-1813” (Lansing: Michigan Historical Commission, 1929),

<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uiug.30112049815845;view=1up;seq=9>.

<sup>60</sup> “Use of the Great Seal,” Michigan *Department of State*, accessed December 10, 2016, [http://www.michigan.gov/sos/0,4670,7-127-1638\\_8731-22832--,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/sos/0,4670,7-127-1638_8731-22832--,00.html).

<sup>61</sup> Dunbar, *Michigan*, 646.

office in the 1970s.<sup>62</sup> Nevada, though, has a different story. Its state printers were selected by lowest bid for the state contract, but each state printing contract lasted for several years opposed to just one year like Michigan's contracts.<sup>63</sup> California has yet a different method by which its state printings are furnished. California still maintains an Office of State Publishing, housed in its Department of General Services. The director of the Office of State Publishing holds the State Printer title, a unique system which has been sustained in California since 1850.<sup>64</sup>

Every state in the Union has needs for printing that are met by whichever method is found to be appropriate in each state – Michigan has tried several approaches of employing a state printer, generally finding contracts by lowest bidder to be the best fit for the state. State printing contracts, as often held by successful partisan newspaper publishers, fit comfortably into book history. Legislative printing offers a unique perspective on the purpose of a book as well as its production. The Legislative “Manuals” and the “Acts of the Legislature” are necessary forms of record keeping and often have a very clear intended audience. The books were printed for the Legislature, therefore the state Legislators were the audience for which the books were intended. Naturally these books would find homes with collectors and in libraries as reference books of state history and as historical artifacts. Additionally, works printed by state printers are easily identified by their title pages which almost always include the printer's name. Michigan's trend of contracting newspaper publishers as state printer gives insight into the printing operation in

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<sup>62</sup> “Kansas State Printers,” *Kansas Historical Society*, accessed December 11, 2016, <https://www.kshs.org/p/kansas-state-printers/10999#McNeal>.

<sup>63</sup> Robert D. Armstrong, *Nevada Printing History: A Bibliography of Imprints & Publications, 1858-1880* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1981), 1875, [https://books.google.com/books?id=IAkpHpPpdsKc&pg=PA2&lpg=PA2&dq=history+of+state+printers&source=bl&ots=cSzqvk2a6D&sig=h9w\\_u1bd1Q4Q2cKpNQxgJoFicIU&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjCoKWo6vLQAhXBJiYKHxsUAPYQ6AEIRzAG#v=onepage&q=contract&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?id=IAkpHpPpdsKc&pg=PA2&lpg=PA2&dq=history+of+state+printers&source=bl&ots=cSzqvk2a6D&sig=h9w_u1bd1Q4Q2cKpNQxgJoFicIU&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjCoKWo6vLQAhXBJiYKHxsUAPYQ6AEIRzAG#v=onepage&q=contract&f=false).

<sup>64</sup> “Office of State Publishing,” *California Department of General Services*, accessed December 11, 2016, <http://www.dgs.ca.gov/osp/home.aspx>.

which the works are printed. The audience of Legislative printings is perfectly clear and their purpose is just as apparent.

Unlike popular books of the nineteenth century, works printed for the state Legislature had an explicit purpose which was to compile and document information for the state's government officials. A question often raised in book history is, just because a book was produced does not mean it was read; were these Legislative printings actually read? The success and competency of the Legislature would provide some idea of whether the state Legislators read the information presented in their printings. It is safe to conclude, because of the notes, folded corners, and various materials pasted into the editions in MSU's Special Collections, that the books were well-read necessary printings that aided in Legislators' understanding of the state government and their duties within the Legislature. It seems these books were not simply printed because it was something that began in the 1830s with the state's birth, rather they were printed because they are vital to the conveyance of information to Legislators and throughout the state government.

State printing is a unique topic which can be often overlooked in the grand scheme of the history of the book and history of printing, though it does hold tremendous value in the discipline. While it is a niche and very specific topic within greater book history, it tends to be well-documented and allows for research and analysis on a national and international level – countries have printing needs that mirror state printing. Governmental and Legislative printing ties political history into the history of the book, especially in Michigan's case. The State of Michigan's long history of contracting partisan newspaper magnates as state printer highlights a deeply rooted system of conflicts of interest and signifies the importance of newspapers in the dissemination of information and influence of nineteenth century America. This study barely

scratched the surface of one state's winding journey of state printing, there are forty-nine other equally interesting studies to be done which would tell an important story of governmental influence on newspapers as an influential medium and printing as a necessary record keeping device as opposed to a business producing works for devotion or entertainment. Michigan proved to be an astounding example of the Legislature's influence on nineteenth century partisan newspapers and the publishers taking advantage of their influence to keep particular party control in the state government so as to keep their contract with the state. The interwoven connections of newspapers and the state government through the state printing contract is immensely important and directly links political history and the history of the book.

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