

# A Great Dispute:



HOW MACHINE TYPESETTING CAME TO GPO,  
AND ONE PUBLIC PRINTER LEFT BECAUSE  
OF IT

GPO HISTORY TALK – APRIL 3, 2013  
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# 1904 and 1905 were eventful years at GPO



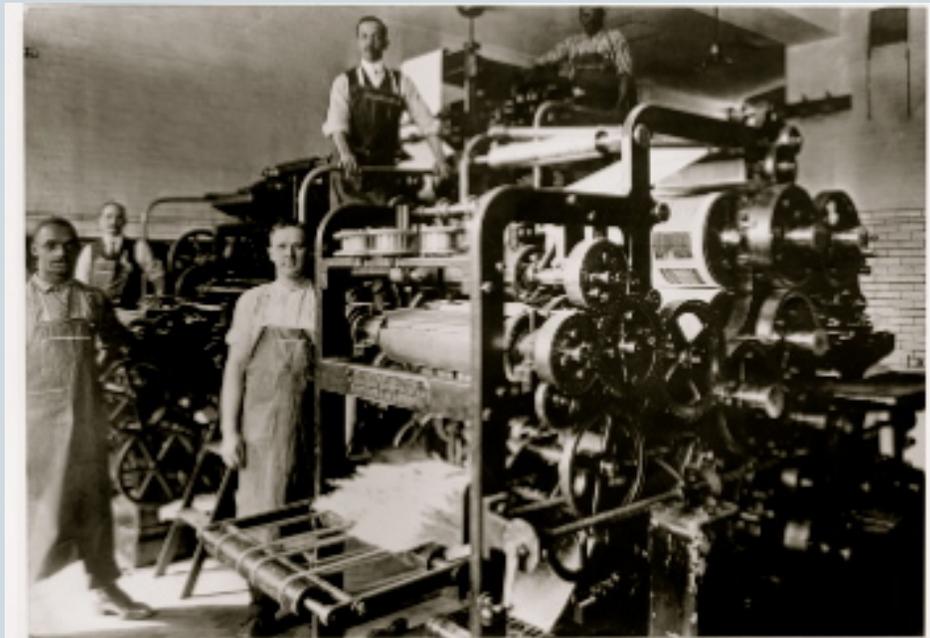
- The new building (Bldg 1) was complete and fully occupied. Its opening brought the total floorspace to about 15 acres



## 1904 -1905



- In fiscal 1904 73 million documents were produced at a cost of \$2.5 million



# 1904-1905



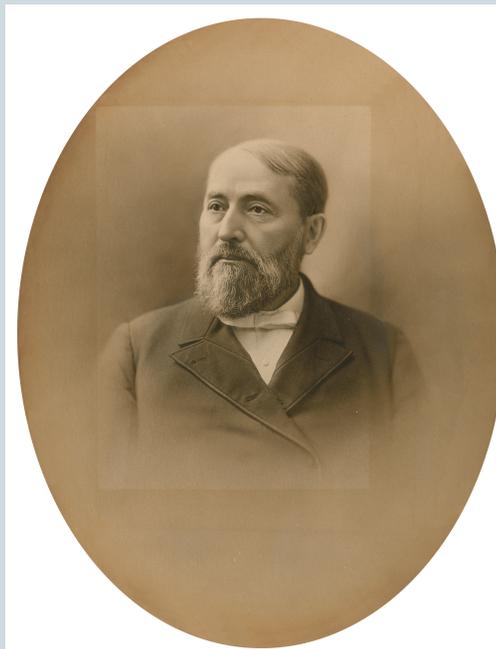
- Around 4500 men and women worked at GPO



1904-1905



- The Public Printer was Frank W. Palmer, first appointed in 1889 by President Harrison, then removed, reappointed by President McKinley in 1897.



# Public Printer Palmer



- By the time Palmer was reappointed in 1897, newspapers and other large print shops across the country were converting to machine (hot metal) typesetting. GPO still set all its type by hand.



# Machine Typesetting Arrives



- In 1903, Congress put pressure on Palmer to introduce typesetting machines to GPO. The printer and pressman unions, though not yet officially recognized, were very powerful, and their resistance to machines that they thought would replace workers undoubtedly influenced Palmer. But he ran an agency that works for Congress, and when Congress nudged, he placed an order for 46 Linotypes and 28 Monotypes, as a trial, in June 1904.

# Machine Typesetting Arrives



# Machine Typesetting Arrives

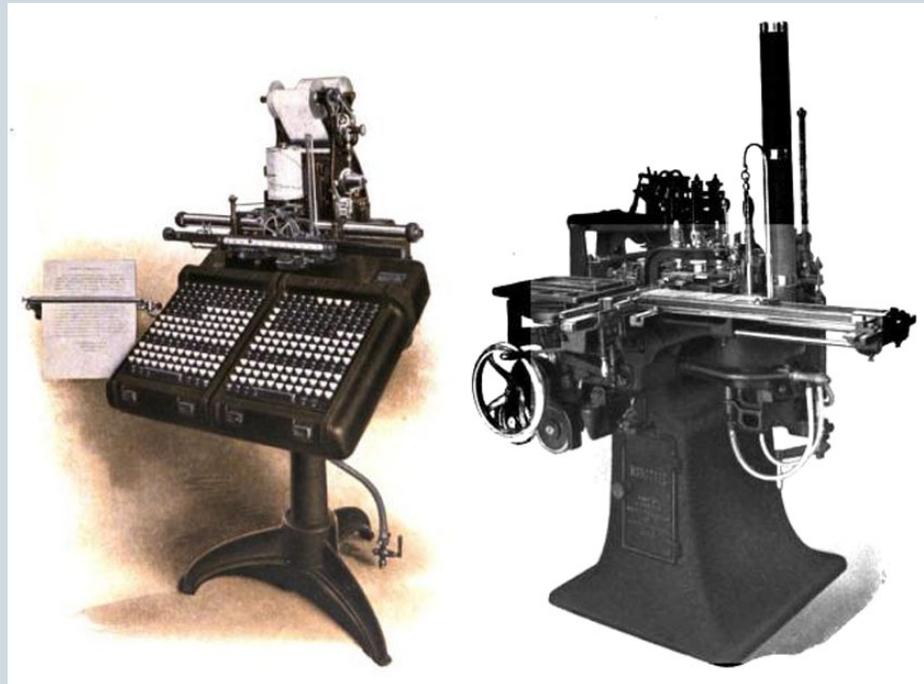


- Palmer's annual reports are notable for their lack of narrative, but in 1904 this response to Congress appeared:
- In June 1904, contracts were made by the Public Printer with the Mergenthaler Linotype Co. for the purchase of 46 double magazine typesetting machines at a cost of \$3600 each, and with the Lanston Monotype Co. for 28 typesetting machines at a cost of \$3150 each. The time for delivery of the machines . . . was 3 months, and their trial by GPO, 60 days. On the delivery of the Mergenthaler Linotype machines, 7 of them were installed in the Job Division, 35 in the Congressional Record Division, and 4 in the branch [at the Library of Congress]. The purchase of a limited number of these machines was made with the view of testing the practicability of the use in the publication of the widely varying kinds of official documents. At the date of publication of this report, sufficient time has not elapsed to determine the questions of economy or practicability.

# In 1905



- In July 1905, a subsequent order for 72 Monotypes was placed (about \$230,000 worth)



# The Dispute



- Mergenthaler almost immediately cried “foul!” and took their complaint, replete with accusations of dirty dealing of many descriptions, directly to President Theodore Roosevelt.



# The Dispute

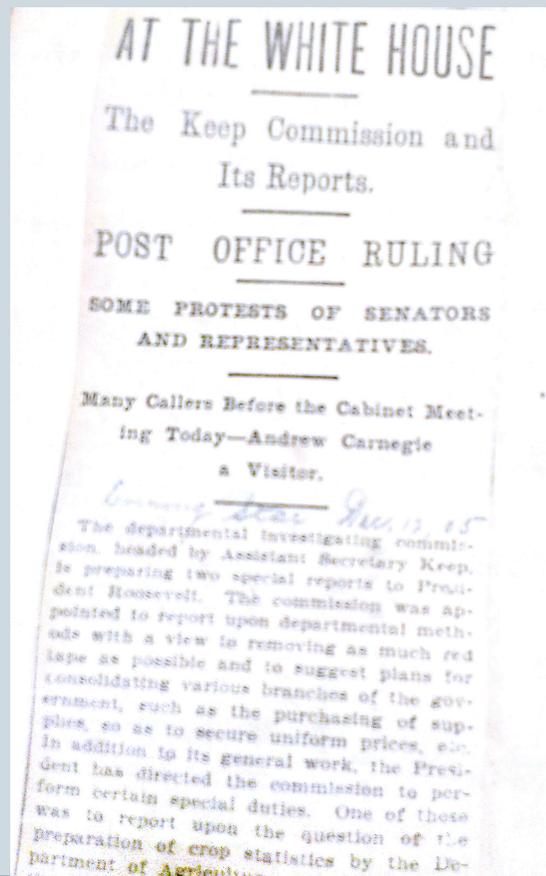


- Roosevelt liked to appoint commissions of inquiry, and had just established the Commission on Departmental Methods, chaired by Assistant Secretary of the Treasury C.H. Keep. They were to be looking at government organization, but GPO became their first subject.

# The Keep Commission



- They reported to the President in the autumn of 1905



# The Keep Commission



- They found that, although Palmer had failed to make the terms of the “trial” clear, and had gone forward with the new Monotype contract rather ill-advisedly, there was no evidence of wrongdoing or malfeasance. They did recommend that the contract be cancelled, and suggested that in the future the Public Printer might do well to negotiate contracts in his office at GPO, rather than in the homes of friends who were also officers in the companies concerned.

# The Keep Commission



- President Roosevelt refused to cancel the contract, since there had been no wrongdoing.



# The Combatants



- Both Mergenthaler and Lanston declared victory, since they were both able to find comments in the commission report unfavorable to their competitor. And in fact, another order for Linotypes was soon placed anyway.

## PRINTERS!

The President of the United States in the following language has officially stamped the Mergenthaler Linotype Company as a calumniator, as an assassin of character; he says:

*"Second only to corruption in a public officer in point of iniquity comes making a baseless charge of corruption, and this is what the committee finds the Mergenthaler Company has done in this case, its comments being in part:*

*"In the light of the failure of the Company to produce evidence of such corruption, it must be held that the charge was made recklessly, and the Mergenthaler Company should be condemned severely for including such a charge in a formal communication to the President of the United States, made as a basis for official action on his part.*

*"It is fair also to the Lanston Monotype Company to say that no evidence was presented by the Mergenthaler Company, nor was any obtained by the committee in the course of its hearing, tending to showing any promise, payment, or consideration of any kind whatsoever made by the Lanston Company, or any of its officers or agents, to any person in the government service." "*

This will sufficiently indicate the nature of the methods we have had to combat; but it does not reveal the extent to which the unseen agents of misrepresentation have sought to injure the name of Monotype.

We are fighting your fight, and we want your co-operation in a campaign for clean business methods, and for truth-telling in competition.

(Continued on next page)

*Government Printing Office Investigation*

Linotype Charges of Unfairness Sustained

**PUBLIC PRINTER DISCHARGED**

Recent Purchase of Type-Setting Machines "Improvident"  
"Indicates Great Partiality and Bias"

¶

*"We Consider it Maladministration," says Keep Commission*

¶

**W**HAT the printing trade in general may be in possession of the facts, undistorted, of the recent Government Printing Office investigation, we show on the following page an extract from a letter written by Mr. Palmer, then Public Printer, to Mr. Dodge, President of the Linotype Company, in which Mr. Palmer gives his reasons for not purchasing additional Linotype Machines. We also print several extracts from Mr. Palmer's testimony before the Commission, and extracts from the testimony of Mr. Brian (Mr. Palmer's chief clerk) narrating his conversations with Mr. Palmer on the subject of additional machines. The several conversations show that Mr. Palmer based his opinion on a report to him, known as "Special Report No. 5."

On the second following page will be found the conclusions of the Keep Investigating Committee, in which they find Mr. Palmer biased and incapable of impartial action in the purchase of type-setting machines, the so-called records worthless, and as a supposed comparison or test as to the merits of the two type-setting machines, grossly unfair to the Mergenthaler Machine. They also find that his purchase of additional machines was improvident, and they consider it maladministration.

# Public Printer Palmer



- The Public Printer fared less well. He chose to discipline, and finally dismiss, 2 managers who had been involved in the investigation, Oscar J. Ricketts and L.C. Hay.



Oscar J. Ricketts.

## Public Printer Palmer



- Ricketts and Hay appealed, and got to the President who, along with the Civil Service Commission directed their reinstatement. Palmer was slow to do so, and was himself removed by Roosevelt, who named Ricketts Acting Public Printer. Shortly after, Roosevelt nominated Charles Stillings as Public Printer. In his term the friction between GPO, Congress, and the White House escalated.

# The Hot Metal Era Begins



- Within a few years, GPO was operating the largest battery of Linotype and Monotype machines on earth, over 100 of each.
- The resulting explosion of work saw GPO with more compositors than ever before

