

IS IT REALLY THE GOODHUE PRESS?

PAUL R. BLANKMAN

IN 1905 THE MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY acquired a nineteenth-century printing press declared to be the one that James M. Goodhue had used in 1849 to print the state's first newspaper, the *Minnesota Pioneer*. Over the next few decades, challenges arose from other parties who insisted that the press was an impostor. Various claimants asserted that Goodhue's original press was either in South Dakota or Wisconsin or was last used in Winnipeg, where it was destroyed by fire. South Dakota and Minnesota newspapers printed numerous articles about the squabble; indignant letters to the editor came from various historical societies; and scholars and students wrote papers on the whereabouts of Goodhue's press, contradicting each other and, often, themselves.

Short of the Minnesota press miraculously gaining the power of speech or Goodhue

Paul Blankman, a 1998 graduate of Marquette College, researched the MHS press while developing the James Goodhue living-history character for the "Tales of the Territory" exhibit at the History Center.



The controversial press, manufactured by the Cincinnati Type Foundry, in the Minnesota Historical Society's collections since 1905



Editor James M. Goodhue, about 1850

returning to life, there seemed no satisfactory proof that the press at the Minnesota Historical Society (MHS) was the one that printed the first issue of the *Pioneer*. All of the possibilities were speculation founded on regional rivalries, dubious oral tradition, and misinformation. By the 1990s the MHS had backed away from its earlier claim, saying only that its press was "reputed to be the one . . . used to print the *Minnesota Pioneer*."¹

Recent reexamination of the evidence while developing the Minnesota History Center exhibit, "Tales of the Territory: Minnesota 1849–1858," has led to a major discovery: the most convincing argument *against* the authenticity of the press was based on inaccurate information. Here, for the first time, is the full story of Goodhue's nomadic printing press, which can be viewed in all of its glory at the exhibit opening October 24 in St. Paul.

JOHN H. KING, the original owner of the press, purchased it in May 1836 in Cincinnati, then the westernmost city that manufactured presses. King probably paid about \$250 for the machine, equivalent to roughly \$4,200 today. Intending to begin a newspaper in Dubuque, King shipped his purchase west, almost certainly by steamboat. After traveling nearly 1,000 miles

on the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, the press reached its destination. King issued the first number of his *Dubuque Visitor* on May 11, 1836, making it the first paper in what later became the state of Iowa.²

In 1842 or 1843 the press was sold to a group of men who moved it to Lancaster, Wisconsin Territory, some 30 miles from Dubuque. There, it was used to publish the *Grant County Herald* (later the *Wisconsin Herald and Grant County Advertiser* and the *Wisconsin Herald*). First issued on March 18, 1843, the *Herald* was one of the earliest newspapers in Wisconsin. It quickly passed through the hands of several editors and publishers before the 34-year-old James Goodhue took over as editor in July 1844. After a few months of writing, Goodhue returned to his law practice, but the lure of journalism proved hard to resist, and he resumed his editorial duties in August 1845. Within a month he purchased the newspaper and all of its equipment, including the press.³

As was true for many newspapers of the day, the *Herald* was in constant financial trouble. Papers were given on credit, and many patrons refused to pay for the issues they took. While advertising helped the paper stay afloat, Goodhue frequently resorted to threats, cajoling, and begging to get a portion of the money he was owed. "County of Grant!" he once wrote, "The *Herald* is your offspring—your only child. Shall it suffer in rags and in indigence, a disgrace to its parent, & die perchance of the *printer's mange*?" Inspired by the threat of rags and indigence, no doubt, Goodhue kept a close watch on the political developments in the ungoverned land to the west, hoping to acquire some of the lucrative government printing contracts that always became available when a new territory was established. When lame duck President James K. Polk finally signed the bill forming Minnesota Territory in March 1849, Goodhue was ready. He packed up his equipment and steamed north on the *Senator* some 240 miles to St. Paul, then a young river town of about 30 buildings. On April 18, 1849, "a raw, cloudy day," Goodhue arrived at the St. Paul levee, where he and his two assistants unloaded the heavy cases of type, paper, and other assorted supplies. The cast-iron printing press, weighing in at about 1,500 pounds, proved a bit more difficult, but the three men finally managed to haul it up the muddy river bluff to the only vacant building in town, a shoddily constructed structure on the north side of Third Street between Jackson and Robert Streets. Goodhue wrote that from inside the new printing office "out-of-doors is visible by more than five hundred apertures; and as far as our type, it is not safe from being *pied* [scattered] on the galleys by the wind."

The overly ventilated office and the occasional pig rooting under the loose board floor notwithstanding, Goodhue persevered, and on April 28, 1849, he issued what became the first newspaper published in the territory, the *Minnesota Pioneer*.⁴

In August 1849, as part of his successful campaign to be elected territorial printer, Goodhue wrote an editorial extolling himself and his qualifications, boasting of his purchase of "a new press of the largest size" from the Boston Foundry. Once this machine arrived, the *Pioneer* office used both presses to complete its business. It is not certain if one printed the newspaper and the other did contract printing, including legislative documents, but it is clear that two hand presses were in use at this time.⁵

IN THE SUMMER of 1852 Goodhue died. The *Pioneer* was continued by his brother, Isaac, for some months before it was sold to Joseph R. Brown. Brown lasted as editor for about a year before he sold the paper and presses to Earle S. Goodrich in early 1854. The new editor determined to turn the *Pioneer* into Minnesota's first daily newspaper and did so beginning with the May 1, 1854, issue. As a hand press operated by two skilled workers was capable of producing at best some 200–250 impressions per hour, it was obvious that a bigger, faster press was necessary to issue a daily paper for the growing city of St. Paul. Goodrich traveled to New York to buy several new presses, one of which was steam operated. The two older hand presses were no longer needed.⁶

Still, Goodrich did not sell the original, Cincinnati-made press immediately. At the end of November 1854 he wrote: "The small medium press on which the *Pioneer* was printed in its early days we still retain, quite as much for the associations connected with it, as for any purpose of utility. . . . We cherish a feeling of regard for the inanimate machine, almost as strong as if it had borne a sentient part in producing the weekly sheets which were loaded with the strong intelligence and brilliant wit of the Founder of the *Pioneer*."⁷ In all likelihood the original Goodhue press was used to print proofs of newspaper pages. Once the type was set, a single impression would have been made using the hand press; the page would then be checked for typographical errors. This was an easier process than using the larger power press to print a single copy of the paper.

Eventually Goodrich did sell the Goodhue press, after which it changed hands several more times. In a 1920 letter to Willoughby M. Babcock Jr., museum curator at the Minnesota Historical Society, Frank Moore, longtime foreman of the press room at the *Pioneer Press*, recalled that the machine was "sold to a

Sauk Rapids party." Multiple sources, including Edwin Clark, former publisher of St. Anthony's territorial-era newspaper, the *Falls Evening News*, claimed that this man was Jeremiah Russell. Russell moved the Goodhue press to Sauk Rapids, about 80 miles northwest of St. Paul, and on April 26, 1855, published the first issue of the *Sauk Rapids Frontiersman*.⁸

The *Frontiersman* was published more or less continuously until December 1859. Russell then sold the press to his assistant, William H. Wood. On January 12, 1860, the *Frontiersman* was reborn as the *Sauk Rapids New Era*, which ceased publication in June 1861, when Wood sold part of his interest in the paper to C. C. Andrews. Andrews moved the press a short distance to St. Cloud and began publishing the *Minnesota Union*. In October 1861 Andrews enlisted in the Union Army and sold his share in the paper back to Wood. At some point between May 1863 and February 1864, the paper's name was changed to the *St. Cloud Union*, and Thomas and J. H. Simonton became part owners and editors. The brothers bought out Wood's interest in March 1864 and changed its name again, to the *St. Cloud Times*, which was edited by R. Channing Moore Jr. Two months later the Simontons had a falling out with their editor and severed the partnership, advertising in the *St. Cloud Democrat* that bank drafts they had written to Moore were not to be honored.⁹

The Simontons then moved the press 45 miles west to Sauk Centre, where in June 1867 they began to publish the *Sauk Centre Herald*. Historian J. Fletcher Williams positively identified the *Herald* press as the original Goodhue one in 1871: "It is worthy of remark that the old pioneer, after thirty-four years of frontier life, is as sound as ever, and the original cabinet, cases, galleys and furniture which accompanied it to Minnesota, are still with it." The machine was eventually sold to the *Carver Free Press*, established in August 1875 some 120 miles southeast of Sauk Centre. Hermann O. Muehlberg, the last owner of that paper, declared in its final issue, May 13, 1897: "After having been connected with the paper for the last sixteen years we have come to the conclusion that Carver is not worthy of a paper." Muehlberg sold the press to C. A. Victor, who moved it 72 miles to Lindstrom, where it was used to publish a Swedish-language paper, the *Medborgaren* (Citizen), beginning on March 3, 1898. Although the press soon became obsolete as circulation grew, it was retained to print proofs until the *Medborgaren* merged with two other papers to form the *Chisago County Press* in May 1905.¹⁰

In 1899 the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*—descendant of the *Minnesota Pioneer*—celebrated its fiftieth anniversary. A

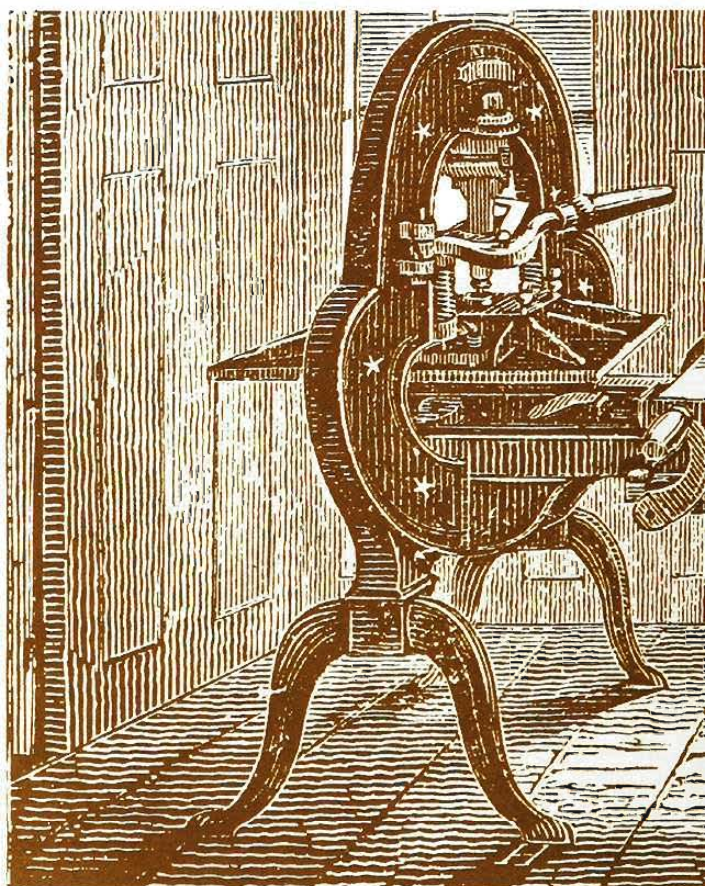
special edition published that November carried several articles on the history of the paper, including one that recounted the press's travels as above, tracking it down to Lindstrom. When the *Medborgaren* merged six years later, the *Pioneer Press* purchased the machine and moved it back to St. Paul, displaying it as the original Goodhue press at the 1905 Minnesota State Fair and then donating it to the Minnesota Historical Society, finally ending the press's peregrinations after almost 70 years and roughly 1,600 miles of travel on water and land.¹¹

WHEN THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY began to claim that it owned the original Goodhue press, however, objections soon arose. Most parties agreed upon the whereabouts of the press before it came to St. Paul; it was what happened after Goodhue's death that caused speculation.

South Dakota's assertion of ownership of the Goodhue press—or, rather, its remains—is based upon the testimony of a single witness, Samuel J. Albright. Albright claimed that he purchased the press from the *Pioneer and Democrat* in 1858 and brought it with him to Dakota Territory, where he founded the *Dakota Democrat*, the first newspaper issued in what is now South Dakota. This press was partly destroyed in 1862 when Dakota Indians apparently set fire to the newspaper building and threw the machine into the Sioux River. In about 1870 workers constructing a dam recovered pieces of this press, which were eventually housed in the local Masonic museum. (A slightly different version of this story reported that the press was found in 1865, lying on rocks near the river.)¹² While there is little doubt that the *Dakota Democrat* press was destroyed in 1862, the conclusion that it was the Goodhue press rests entirely upon Albright's claim that he brought that machine to South Dakota.

Shortly after Sioux Falls's *Daily Argus-Leader* publicized Albright's story in 1919, two Minnesota-based historians, Willoughby Babcock of the MHS and Sigurd Melby, a student at the University of Minnesota, challenged it. As they pointed out, the inconsistencies in the story are numerous. Albright's 1899 letter to the South Dakota state historian, for example, mistakenly called the press "a Washington, of the Smith pattern." These two terms refer to different types of presses, albeit similar machines that are easily mistaken for each other.

Still, it is as if Albright were calling an orange "an apple, of the orange variety." Other discrepancies include mistaking the date that the *Dakota Democrat* was first published, mislabeling the *Minnesota Pioneer* the *St. Paul Pioneer*; exaggerating the number of people killed by the Dakota when the press was destroyed, and claiming that the press was first purchased in 1834, used in Milwaukee in 1836, and never used in Lancaster, Wisconsin. In addition, Albright claimed that St. Paul papers and an early issue of the *Dakota Democrat* had noted the coincidence of the same press printing the first papers in Iowa, western Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Dakota Territory. Melby pointed out, however, that no researcher had found any such statement, although the first issue of the *Democrat* was not available to check. While none of these inaccurate statements alone could disprove South Dakota's claim, collectively they raised serious doubts. Melby convincingly argued that Albright was not reliable, quoting his admission in 1898, when questioned about other events in the 1850s and 1860s:



Nineteenth-century print shop and Washington press with characteristic acorn-shaped frame, from *An Abridgment of Johnson's Typographia*. 1828.

So long a period has elapsed since my residence in the west—now more than forty years—and so much has transpired to direct my thoughts into other and dissimilar channels, that I may find it difficult to recall the *events* of those early days.

When my friend Judge Flandreau [Flandrau] of Minnesota wrote to me for information relating to the “squatter” organization of Dakota, I replied that the *facts* had entirely passed from my memory.¹³

Frank Moore’s 1920 letter to Babcock, which suggested that the press Albright bought was not the original one, offers a plausible explanation for the confusion over ownership:

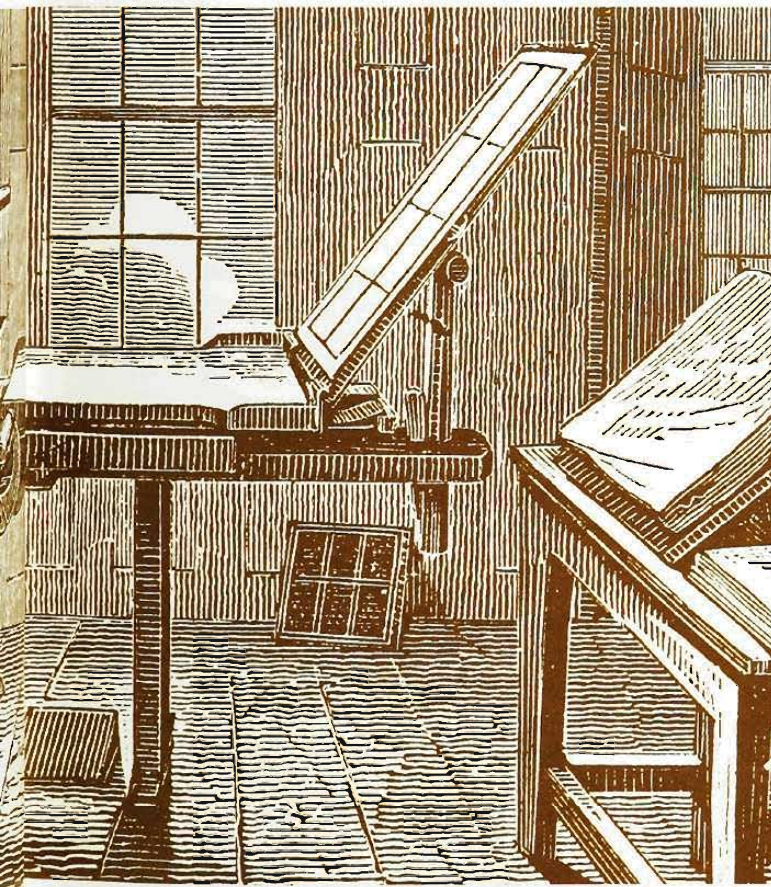
As I remember it the Weekly Pioneer was printed on the Goodhue press until the Daily Pioneer was started sometime in 1854, I think, and was then discarded for a power press and sold to a Sauk Rapids party. When the Pioneer and Democrat consolidated two or three years later the hand press they used was dis-

carded, and that is the press I think Sam Albright took to Dakota with him. Albright was a compositor on the Pioneer and left St. Paul for Dakota shortly after I arrived there. Stick to your guns. Your press [MHS’s] is old enough to have printed the first paper on and I am pretty sure it did.¹⁴

ANOTHER BLOW TO South Dakota’s claim came from S. J. Huntley, the editor of the *Frazee Weekly Press*, who in 1922 wrote: “Well does the editor of The Press remember the old Washington hand press . . . for he used to ink the forms on it for the Sauk Centre Herald when he started in to learn the printers trade at a dollar and a half a week when he was a kid. We hope that the ‘old man killer’ will remain in its place of honor in the Historical Society building forever and a day. Our ‘fond memories’ of it are mostly bunches of grief.”

Some two decades after Babcock and Melby first pointed out the flaws in the South Dakota claim, the Minnehaha County Historical Society (Sioux Falls) proposed an altered version: Albright’s story was true, but the press had been recovered from the river essentially undamaged. One E. A. Sherman—who had been involved in excavating for the dam—then sent the press to the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* or the *St. Paul Dispatch*, which in turn presented it to the MHS. Setting aside the unlikely possibility that the Goodhue press ever entered South Dakota, this claim, too, can be easily disproved. In 1899 the *Pioneer Press* located what it firmly believed was the Goodhue press in Lindstrom. When the *Pioneer Press* in 1905 announced the acquisition of the machine that it later donated to the MHS, the article specifically stated that it had been used on the *Medborgaren*. No mention was made of its coming from South Dakota. Finally, Arthur Edman, the stepson of the former editor of the *Medborgaren*, visited the MHS museum and examined the press, positively identifying it as the one he had used in the *Medborgaren* press shop.¹⁵ While South Dakota may dispute the origins of the MHS press, it clearly did not return to Minnesota from South Dakota.

THAT STATE WAS NOT the only one to argue that the true Goodhue press was not in Minnesota. A Wisconsin claim tells a different story of what happened to the venerable machine after it left the *Pioneer*. A December 1946 *Pioneer Press* article recounting the debate and lingering controversy offered the possibility that a hand press in the offices of the *Burnett County Journal* in Grantsburg was the *Pioneer*’s first. According to this scenario, the Goodhue press was sold in the early 1850s to Edmund Otis, who began publishing the Hudson,



Wisconsin, *North Star* on November 30, 1854. Otis eventually sold it to James D. Reynert, who in 1860 founded the *St. Croixan* (St. Croix Falls) with Junius A. Bartlett. In 1861 the *St. Croixan* was moved to Osceola and reborn as the *Polk County Press*, which in 1875 was moved to Grantsburg.¹⁶ This chain of events depends upon the *North Star* being printed on Goodhue's original press. Were it not for the words of the one man who knew best where the Goodhue press was when the *North Star* was founded, this theory might be plausible.

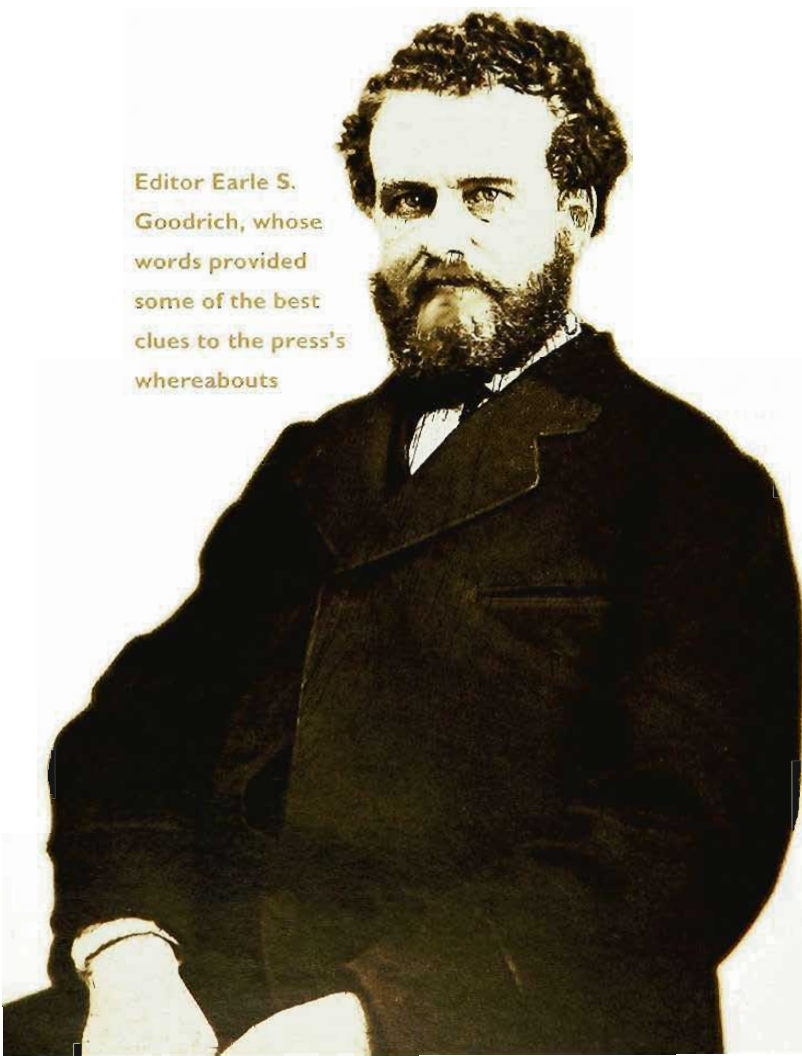
Earle S. Goodrich, the editor of the *Minnesota Pioneer*, wrote on November 25, 1854, that he was still in possession of "the small medium press on which the *Pioneer* was printed in its early days." Later in the same article, the editor explained that "We have been obliged, by a regard to our own, and the public, interests, to discard the old-fashioned, slow and easy hand-presses, for the latest and best make of Taylor's Cylinder Printing Machines, which will be driven by Steam." He spoke of his "feeling of regard for the inanimate machine," which served him as a reminder of the brilliant first editor of the *Pioneer*. To suggest that Goodrich

wrote this sincere column one day, reversed himself the next, and sold the press to Otis defies logic. Even if one assumes that Goodrich sold the press the same day his article was printed in the *Pioneer*, it is highly unlikely that Otis could have transported the three-quarter-ton press and type nearly 20 miles over land and the semi-frozen St. Croix River, composed an issue of the *North Star*, set it in type, and printed several hundred copies of it—all in perhaps four days. Typesetting alone would have taken some time, and the paper would have had to be printed on November 29 to be distributed on the issue date of November 30. If the *North Star* did acquire its press from the *Pioneer* in the fall of 1854, it was one of the paper's other hand presses. The *Pioneer* at this time owned another obsolete hand press, the one Goodhue had bought from the Boston Foundry in 1849 for legislative printing.¹⁷ It seems quite possible that this was the press that went to Grantsburg. The MHS press could not be the one purchased from Boston; cast in its frame is the name "Cincinnati Typefoundry." Only one of Goodhue's presses was made in Cincinnati.

A fourth possibility, proposed by former Presbyterian missionary James P. Schell, is that the true Goodhue press is not in Minnesota, South Dakota, or Wisconsin. Instead, Schell claimed in an unpublished paper, it was destroyed in a Winnipeg fire in 1865. According to this story, the Goodhue press was initially damaged in a St. Paul fire in the early 1850s, when it fell from the second story of the building into the basement. Later repaired by a local blacksmith, it was sold to missionaries heading to Winnipeg. After a long journey north, the press was put into use again printing the early issues of the *Nor' Wester*, beginning in late 1859. In February 1865, however, a fire destroyed the printing building, including the press.¹⁸

Schell undermined his own arguments almost from the beginning, claiming that the press was originally purchased in Cincinnati in 1849, along with an identical one intended for use at a Cass Lake, Minnesota, mission. If this is true, this press cannot be Goodhue's original one. While Schell initially stated that the press arrived in St. Paul in the spring of 1849, three paragraphs later he contradicted himself by asserting that the *St. Paul* [*sic*] *Pioneer* began to use the press in the late summer or fall of 1849. There are no footnotes or citations in Schell's paper, so the source of his information is unclear. While he credited "the tradition . . . as reported to me by Mr. Geo. B. Winship, of the Grand Forks Herald," an 1895 letter from Winship to Schell contradicts the latter's story. In it, Winship, who once worked on the

Editor Earle S. Goodrich, whose words provided some of the best clues to the press's whereabouts



PRINTING THE MINNESOTA PIONEER

JAMES GOODHUE, the *Pioneer's* first editor, composed the articles for each issue in longhand, on scraps of paper. Although the *Pioneer* was four pages long, Goodhue only needed to write original material for the second and part of the third pages. As was typical of midnineteenth-century newspapers, the first page was made up of national and international news, humor, and short fiction that the publisher clipped from other papers. The fourth page and much of the third contained advertisements. Goodhue's paper, for example, ran advertisements not only from St. Paul but other river towns including Galena and St. Louis.

Goodhue had at least two assistants and frequently several more when the legislature was in session and its printing had to be done. It was the assistants who set type by hand—one letter, one space at a time. The advertisements were easy, because they rarely changed. When Goodhue had decided which clipped stories to use, the assistants began to set them in type. As he finished writing articles of his own, these would also be set by the compositors or typesetters.

Type was arranged in two cases. The upper case contained capital letters and the lower case had the small characters. (The designations upper- and lower-case eventually came to describe the style of the characters.) A printer had to own more than two cases, however, to hold the various type faces and sizes used in an average issue. Type was usually cast in an alloy of lead, but larger sizes may have been carved from wood.

As the typesetters pulled type from the cases, they placed it in metal composing sticks. A skilled worker had the placement of the letters memorized and did not need to look at the case while selecting type. The type, of course, appeared reversed, but experienced printers could read it quite easily. When the composing stick was full, the typesetter would transfer it to a flat sheet of metal with raised sides, called a galley. The typesetter made sure the type was set at an even height in the galley, with words and articles separated by blank pieces of metal. Galleys formed the columns of a paper. When all of the galleys were finished, a proof would be printed from them to check for typographical errors. If there were any (and there usually were), they were corrected before the galleys were locked into the chase—essentially the frame for the page.

Once the chase had been set on the bed of the press, the type was inked. By the time the *Pioneer* was being printed, inking rollers had come into general use, replacing balls of sheepskin or deerskin. One of the two printers would lightly run the inked roller across the type, an action generally done for every impression.

A sheet of paper—slightly dampened to absorb ink well—was then placed upon the type, and a second printer moved the bed of the press under the platen, which was about half an inch above the type, by means of a "rounce," or rotating crank. (The bed was mounted on rails.) Next, he pulled the press lever toward himself, straightening a knee-joint attached to the platen. This lever, which was indirectly attached to the joint through one or more connecting hinges and levers, forced the platen down to make an impression. When the lever was released, springs attached to either side of the platen pulled it back up from the type. One printer then rolled the bed back out, and the other man peeled off the paper and replaced it with a fresh piece. Skilled printers could pull up to 250 impressions in an hour—an impressive figure given the slowness of a hand press—but this was in a time when steam-powered presses were already printing thousands of copies per hour.

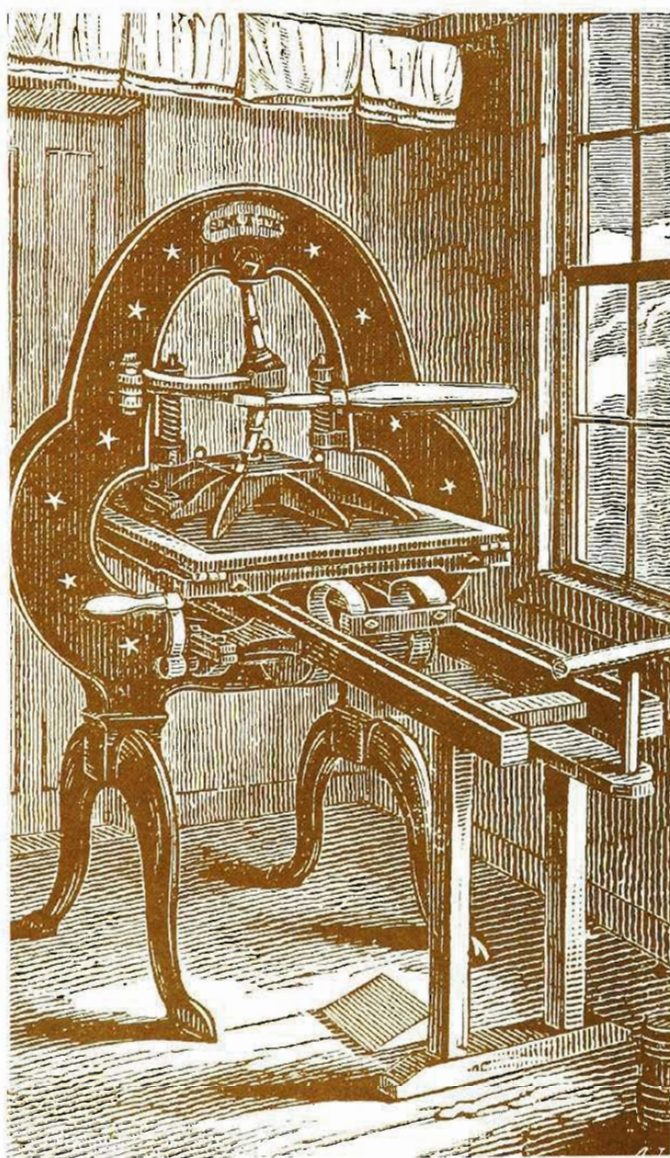
Freshly printed pages were placed in racks; when dry, the other side of the paper was printed. After the entire press run was finished, the type forms would be moved carefully from the press to a wooden trough filled with a mixture of lye and water. The type would be placed in this liquid, and an unlucky apprentice would have to scrub away the thick ink with a stiff-bristled brush. Once clean, the individual pieces of type were laboriously removed from the forms and returned to their proper cases in preparation for the next issue of the *Pioneer*.



Journeymen printers take a lunch break, about 1910, in front of type cases unchanged from the nineteenth century.



Equal-length levers, characteristic of the Smith press knee-joint (left), and the improved "figure 4" design of the Washington



Nor' Wester; wrote that that paper's press had been purchased in St. Paul in the early 1860s. Furthermore, Winship said that the original press was still being used years after Schell claimed that it had been destroyed. "I left there in 1870," Winship wrote, "and have never heard what became of the plant; in fact the whole business has never been referred to before." The lack of proof in Schell's paper, the multiple errors, and the apparent misquotation or misinterpretation of the information from the only named source clearly render the Winnipeg story unreliable.

SIGURD MELBY'S PAPER that rejected the South Dakota claim also concluded that the MHS press was a "stranger and an impostor." Melby believed that the MHS press was not the same type of machine that Goodhue used and that the Cincinnati Type Foundry, which made the MHS press, did not begin manufacturing until 1857, almost a decade after the *Pioneer* was founded.¹⁹ It has recently been discovered, however, that the information upon which Melby's reasoning was based was inaccurate.

Melby and many of the other sources writing about the Goodhue press refer to it as a "Washington" press, one of the most popular types of hand press in the nineteenth century. The MHS machine, Melby believed, was not a Washington. The distinctive acorn-like shape of the frame caused Melby concern; the frame did not look like illustrations of Washington presses. He also cited printing authority Henry L. Bullen of the Typographic Library and Museum in New Jersey, who, based on a photograph, concluded, "It is a press known as the Acorn." Thus, Melby understandably believed that the press could not have been Goodhue's. "To me," he wrote, "it is inconceivable that [the sources] should all mistake an 'Acorn' for a 'Washington.'"²⁰ If Melby had had a little more knowledge of printing history, however, he would have understood the confusion.

Melby was correct in one thing: the MHS press is not a Washington press. It is, in fact, a Smith press. The Washington design was a slightly modified version of the earlier Smith press; the only distinction between the two is the manner in which the hand lever is operated. On a Washington, the lever is attached to a knee (or toggle) joint above the platen in such a way that

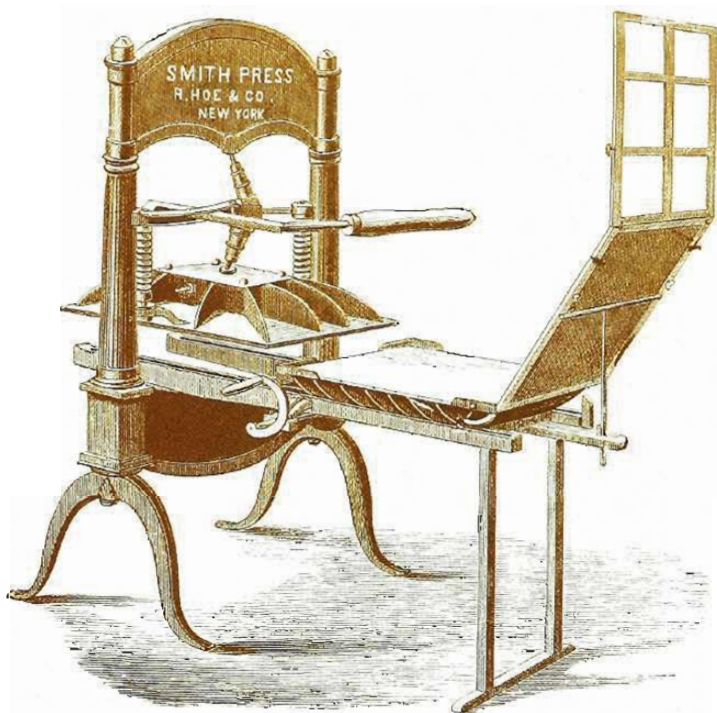
Illustration of a Smith press almost identical to the Cincinnati Type Foundry model owned by the Minnesota Historical Society, from *An Abridgment of Johnson's Typographia*, 1828

pulling the lever results in *pushing* on the knee-joint, straightening it and pressing the platen down onto the type. On a Smith press, the lever *pulls* the joint straight to achieve the same result. If a printer released the lever of a Smith press suddenly, the lever would “fly back with so much force as to cause its parts to jump from their sockets.”²¹ The Washington press corrected this flaw. A careful look at the lever on the MHS machine reveals that it is a Smith press. Yet many of the discussions of Goodhue’s original machine refer to it as a Washington press, a point that Melby noted. How could the MHS press possibly be the original?

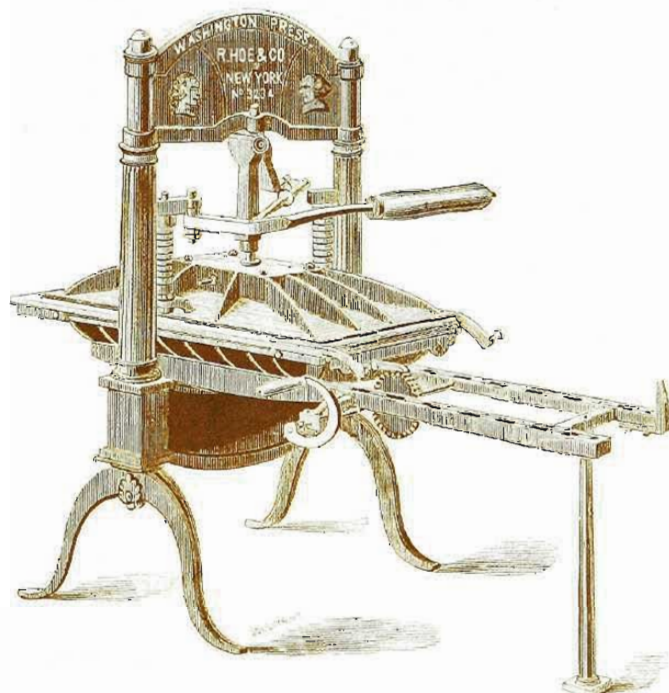
The answer is simple. The first reference to Goodhue’s Washington press did not come until 1899, more than 45 years after the editor’s death. By this time, Smith presses had become obsolete and Washington presses made up the vast majority of current hand presses. Rollo Silver, in his book *The American Printer*, quoted a printing historian: “The name Washington, as applied to the iron press, has been in common use for over a century.” Washington became a generic name for a hand press, much as Xerox has for photocopiers or Kleenex for tissues. Someone writing about the Goodhue press at the end of the nineteenth century would quite naturally have assumed it was a Washington, a term that Goodhue himself never used. Only a few recent writers with a good knowledge of press design have referred to the Minnesota press as a Smith. With the structural similarity between the two types, it is understandable that there was confusion.²²

The fact that Henry Bullen called the MHS press an Acorn, a term that refers solely to frame design, confused Melby and succeeding generations who became convinced that the press was not Goodhue’s. There is, however, no such thing as an Acorn press. Smith presses have been referred to as Smith Acorn presses because of their shape, and early Washington presses also had an acorn-shaped frame. Illustrations of Smith and Washington presses originally published in 1828, about a year after the Washington press was developed, clearly show this shape. It was only in subsequent years that the Smith and Washington press frames were modified to their more rectangular forms. The later design improved the strength of the press, as well as substantially reducing its weight.²³ This improvement was the design to which Melby compared the MHS press.

Melby’s other argument against the authenticity of the MHS press—that the Cincinnati Type Foundry did not begin manufacturing presses until 1857—stems from another letter from Bullen, this one with a piece of inaccurate information. In a history of printing and publishing in the American West (which, in the mid-



Lighter, stronger frame design replaced the acorn shape in both Smith and Washington presses, confusing Melby and other detectives who might have been unaware of the machines’ earlier appearance.



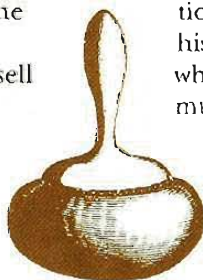
nineteenth century, included Cincinnati). Walter Sutton cited an 1822 advertisement of the Cincinnati Type Foundry stating, "Stansbury's Patent Presses and Screw Presses made to order." An 1826 ad detailing the foundry's products proclaimed that the company "manufacture[s], in a superior manner, all kinds of type, presses, chases." Even James Schell's unpublished paper, while of dubious accuracy, documented the 1849 purchase of a Cincinnati-made press intended for missionary use at Cass Lake, well before the 1857 date suggested by Bullen.²⁴ It is clear that the Cincinnati Type Foundry was, indeed, making its own presses in the 1820s, a decade before the Goodhue press was purchased there by John H. King. Melby's two arguments can therefore be dismissed.

THIS IS THE FIRST TIME that all known information relating to the Goodhue press has been examined. Previous researchers have used only bits and pieces of the total story, usually whichever elements best supported their contentions. After weighing the merits of the various arguments, it seems clear that the MHS press is most likely the one first used by Goodhue. Its reconstructed story is the only one in which all the dates seem to fit, there is a logical progression from one paper to another, and multiple sources support the claim. The press once used by Jeremiah Russell to print the *Sauk Rapids Frontiersman* is the same press now owned by the MHS. Sources, including one from as early as 1871, state without

hesitation that Russell purchased Goodhue's original press from the *Pioneer*. Men who later used the MHS press on their own papers—C. C. Andrews of the *Minnesota Union* and S. J. Hundley of the *Sauk Centre Herald*—are also firm in their belief that the press had belonged to Goodhue.²⁵

Perhaps no one will ever prove conclusively that the MHS press printed the first issue of the *Minnesota Pioneer*. The only primary sources are the press itself and the occasional small article in the *Pioneer* referring to Goodhue's press. All other information stems from oral traditions that were gradually accepted as fact, even if they seemed to contradict other sources. I have sifted through these often contradictory traditions to help ascertain the history of the press, but all research must be taken with a grain of salt and compared to primary sources as often as is feasible. What may be incontrovertible fact to one is mere rumor to another; history, like beauty, is often in the eye of the beholder.

Because of the lack of documentation, tracing the history of objects—even fifteen-hundred-pound, cast-iron objects such as the Goodhue press—is often extremely difficult, but it is not impossible. As Steven Lubar and W. David Kingery wrote in the introduction to *History From Things*, "[I]t is not easy to read history from things. They are illegible to those who know how to read only writing. They are mute to those who listen only for pronouncements from the past. But they do speak; they can be read."²⁶ □



NOTES

1. Jane Lamm Carroll, "'Good Times, Eh?': Territorial Newspapers," *Minnesota History* 56 (Winter 1998–99): 223.

2. J. King to J. M. Goodhue, *Minnesota Pioneer*, Oct. 4, 1849, p. 3. Cast in the arch of the frame is "Cincinnati Typefoundry." In 1823 the Cincinnati company advertised cast-iron presses for \$250; see Walter Sutton, *The Western Book Trade: Cincinnati as a Nineteenth-Century Publishing and Book-Trade Center* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1961), 17n23. Inflation estimated using John J. McCusker, *How Much Is That in Real Money?: A Historical Price Index for Use as a Deflator of Money Values in the Economy of the United States* (Worcester, MA: American Antiquarian Society, 1992). King remembered publishing the first issue on June 11, but other sources date it to May 11; Douglas C. McMurtrie, "The Beginnings of Printing in Iowa," *Annals of Iowa* 19 (July 1933): 3, 7.

3. *History of Grant County, Wisconsin* (Chicago: Western Historical Co., 1881), 656–57; Douglas C. McMurtrie, *Early Printing in Wisconsin* (Seattle: Frank McCaffrey, 1931), 54, 95; *Wisconsin Herald* (Lancaster), Sept. 13, 1845, p. 2.

4. *Grant County Herald*, Aug. 31, 1844, p. 2; *Minnesota Pioneer*, Apr. 28, June 28, 1849, Apr. 15, 1852—all p. 2. The mileage given assumes that Goodhue departed from Galena, Illinois. From Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin, the other major steamboat port near Lancaster, the distance is about 185 miles. The *Minnesota Register's* first issue was dated Apr. 27, 1849, but it was printed in Cincinnati some weeks earlier and then shipped to St. Paul, arriving in mid-May. Its press did not arrive in St. Paul until July; George S. Hage, *Newspapers on the Minnesota Frontier* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society [MHS], 1967), 1.

5. *Minnesota Pioneer*, Aug. 30, 1849, p. 2. Goodhue claimed in another Aug. 30 article that the "Pioneer will [soon] be enlarged to the size of a full double medium sheet." While the *Pioneer* was enlarged from six to seven columns beginning with the Oct. 4, 1849, issue, each sheet remained the same size; the columns simply became narrower.

6. Mary W. Berthel, *Horns of Thunder: The Life and Times of James M. Goodhue* (St. Paul: MHS, 1948), 259–60; Hage, *Newspapers*, 39–40; "Prospectus of the Daily Pioneer," Mar. 13, 1854, printed in, for example, the May 1, 1854, issue, p. 2. For number of impressions, see *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, Nov. 9, 1899, p. 39.

7. Goodrich to Henry Sibley, Apr. 7, 1854, quoted in Hage, *Newspapers*, 56–57; *Daily Pioneer*, Nov. 25, 1854, p. 2. "Small medium" is not an oxymoron but refers to the size of the printing bed. Presses came in sizes such as small medium, medium, and double medium.

8. Frank Moore to W. M. Babcock Jr., Jan. 22, 1920, and Edwin Clark to Babcock, Apr. 5, 1920, copies in MHS museum collections accession file 4222. See also Alfred T. Andreas, *Illustrated Historical Atlas of the State of Minnesota* (1874; reprint, Evansville, IN: Unigraphic, 1976), 226; Willoughby Babcock, "The Goodhue Press," *Minnesota History Bulletin* 3 (Feb. 1920): 292; J. Fletcher Williams, *History of the Newspaper Press of St. Paul, Minnesota* (St. Paul?: 1871), 4.

9. Babcock, "Goodhue Press," 292–93; *St. Cloud Democrat*, May 19, 1864, p. 2. The MHS does not own copies of the *Minnesota Union* and the *St. Cloud Union* between May 1, 1863, and Feb. 25, 1864, but the consecutive volume numbers leave no doubt that the *St. Cloud Union* succeeded the *Minnesota Union*.

10. Williams, *History of Newspaper Press*, 4; *Carver Free Press*, May 13, 1897, p. 1; *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, Nov. 9, 1899, p. 39; *Center City Press*, Apr. 27, 1905, p. 4. Williams claims that the press also printed the *Sauk Valley News*, the immediate predecessor to the *Herald*. The MHS has no record of such a paper, although Williams, a contemporary writer, could be correct.

11. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, Nov. 9, 1899, p. 39, Sept. 4, 1905, p. 2, Sept. 12, 1905, p. 3; Babcock, "Goodhue Press," 293.

12. "The Pioneer Printing Press," *South Dakota Monthly* 2 (Mar. 1900): 179–80; *Daily Argus-Leader* (Sioux Falls), Nov. 8, 17, 1919, clippings in accession file 4222. The *Daily Pioneer* and *St. Paul Daily Democrat* merged in 1855, becoming the *Daily Pioneer and Democrat*; Hage, *Newspapers*, 127.

13. Babcock, "Goodhue Press," 292–94; Sigurd Melby, "The Goodhue Press," typescript, 1923, p. 5–10, copy in MHS Library; Albright letter reprinted in *Daily Argus-Leader*, Nov. 17, 1919, clipping. The italics in the quotation are Melby's.

14. Here and below, Moore to Babcock, Jan. 22, 1920; *Frazee Weekly Press*, May 18, 1922, p. 2, reprinted in Melby, "Goodhue Press," 14.

15. C. A. Smith to W. M. Babcock, June 9, 19, 1945, and Marjorie Towson, MHS registrar, memo to file, Dec. 17, 1964, copies of all in accession file 4222; *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, Sept. 4, 1905, p. 2. The *Pioneer Press* and the *Dispatch* did not consolidate until 1909.

16. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, Dec. 29, 1946, p. 14.

17. *Daily Pioneer*, Nov. 25, 1854, p. 2; *Minnesota Pioneer*, Aug. 30, 1849, p. 2.

18. Here and below, James P. Schell, "Story of Pioneer Presses (of Northwest U. S. and Canada)," typescript, 1928, p. 2–4, and Geo. B. Winship to Rev. J. P. Schell, Sept. 9, 1895, copied by Schell into "A Pair of Pioneer Printing-presses," typescript [1926], both in the James P. Schell Papers, MHS.

19. Melby, "Goodhue Press," 21.

20. Melby, "Goodhue Press," 16–21; Henry L. Bullen to Ruth O. Roberts (MHS), Mar. 5, 1919, copy in accession file 4222. Melby missed an oblique clue in the letter—that Matthew Smith of New York modified the acorn-style frame.

21. W. W. Pasko, ed., *American Dictionary of Printing and Bookmaking* (1894; reprint, Detroit: Gale Research Co., 1967), 256.

22. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, Nov. 9, 1899, p. 39; Rollo G. Silver, *The American Printer, 1787–1825* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1967), 52; Kira Obolensky, "The Goodhue Press," *MCBA* 1 (Jan. 1986): 3; Peyton Reavis to MHS, Oct. 18, 1987, copy in accession file 4222.

23. Obolensky, "Goodhue Press," 3.

24. Henry L. Bullen to Ruth O. Roberts, Mar. 14, 1919, accession file 4222; Sutton, *Western Book Trade*, 14; Schell, "Pioneer Presses," 2, 4–5.

25. Williams, *History of Newspaper Press*, 4; Andreas, *Illustrated Historical Atlas*, 226; Babcock, "Goodhue Press," 292; Clark to Babcock, Apr. 5, 1920, and C. C. Andrews, "Statement about the Goodhue Press," Mar. 24, 1920, copies in accession file 4222; Huntley, in Melby, "Goodhue Press," 14.

26. Steven Lubar and W. David Kingery, eds., *History from Things: Essays on Material Culture* (Washington, D. C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993), viii.

The reproductions from *Johnson's Typographia* are from Rollo G. Silver, *The American Printer, 1787–1825* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1967), figs. 2b and 3; those on p. 401 are from ads reproduced in Harold E. Sterne, *Catalogue of Nineteenth-Century Printing Presses* (Cincinnati: Ye Olde Printery, 1978), 189, 191; the engravings on p. 400 are by John DePol, from Stephen O. Saxe, *American Iron Hand Presses* (1992), courtesy the publisher, Oak Knoll Books. All others, including p. 393, by Eric Mortenson/MHS are in MHS collections.



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