

A COMMON PRESS IN NEW ZEALAND

PRINTING WAS NOT INTRODUCED into New Zealand until 1830, well after the manufacture of iron presses had been firmly established in Britain. It is easy therefore to assume that in the early days of printing in the colony only presses of the Stanhope, Columbian or Albion kind were used — though the throw-away reference by Samuel Revans (Wellington's first printer) to a 'toy of a press' which he used in 1840 for jobbing work¹ tempts one to speculate whether one of Cowper's 'Parlour Printing Presses' manufactured by Holtzapffel & Co. from the 1830s onwards was not also among early equipment.

One common-press was however imported, for use at the Roman Catholic mission at Kororareka. In response to Bishop Pompallier's plea in August 1839 for 'two first-class presses, never mind the cost. . . , a proper printing press, with one or two lay brothers to work it' the Society of Mary in Lyons arranged for Jean François Yvert to take a course of training in Poisson's printing office in Caen. When Yvert came to the Bay of Islands in June 1841 he came well-equipped, with three different founts of type each of 300 kg from Laurent et DeBerny, a Stanhope-style press from Gaveaux — and an old wooden press he had been given by Poisson, on which he hoped to teach Maori assistants.² This equipment was later supplemented in 1846 by a *presse grand raison* (manufactured by Tissier et Cie in Paris) and further types by Laurent et DeBerny.

Printing at the Catholic mission ceased by April 1850. By 14 July 1852, possession and use of the distinctive Laurent et DeBerny types had passed to the Auckland printers Williamson & Wilson, who used them in *The New Zealander* and other publications well into the 1860s.

Although according to R.M. Ross,³ 'nothing more is heard of the old wooden press' after March 1846, it seems almost certain that it too had passed into Williamson & Wilson's possession. In 1890 Robert Coupland Harding, speculating about the history of the mission presses and the whereabouts of Colenso's Stanhope, stated:

Only a few days ago an old pressman told us that in 1850 he was working in San Francisco, at the office of the *Journal of Commerce*, when the proprietor imported from the *New Zealander* office in Auckland an old wooden press, for which he paid a high price. Mr R.P. Brydone, our informant, added that he had worked the said press, using with it the old-fashioned inking-balls.⁴

As it is most unlikely that Williamson & Wilson would have had other wooden presses to dispose of, it is safe to identify the *Journal of Commerce* press with that which had been used at Caen in M. Poisson's office, and presented to Yvert for use in New Zealand.

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NOTES


- ¹ K.A. Coleridge, 'Printing in Wellington : the pioneer period', *New Zealand Libraries*, 44 (1983) 61-5.
- ² R.M. Ross, 'Bishop Pompallier's Press in New Zealand', *The Printing Art*, 1 (1973) 2-14.
- ³ Ross, p.13.
- ⁴ [R.C. Harding], 'Historic Presses', *Typo*, 4, no.39, 29 March 1890; reprinted in *A Selection from Typo, a New Zealand Typographic Journal 1887-1897* (Wellington, 1982), p.84.

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