Introduction to A Register of Artists, Engravers, Booksellers, Bookbinders, Printers & Publishers in New York City, 1821-1842

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A REGISTER
of Artists, Engravers, Booksellers
Bookbinders, Printers & Publishers
in New York City, 1821-42

Compiled by
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For Erica, who loves to find her name in books

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INTRODUCTION

This Register presents the names of individuals and firms connected with the graphic arts in the city of New York between the years 1821 and 1842 with reference, where useful, to the Register for the period 1633-1820 compiled by George L. McKay and published by the New York Public Library in 1942. We share with this predecessor the goal that “the list may be of value not only as a record of those who were engaged in these trades and professions but that, from the recorded occupations, addresses, firm names and other dated information, it may be of some assistance also in dating undated books, papers and pictures, and in identifying anonymous printers, publishers, artists, etc.”

The Register has been compiled primarily from the annual directories published by Thomas Longworth: Longworth’s American Almanac, New-York Register, and City Directory.¹ These directories, published each June or July during this period, continued the series begun by Longworth’s father, David. The series ends in 1842, for reasons not yet discovered, and the annual directories are taken up by other publishers.

The form of Longworth’s Directory was established long before 1821. A dozen or so pages of display advertising generally preceded the title page, which was followed by an almanac and information on the Post Office, mails, banks, insurance companies and city offices. Then began the directory, consisting of a single alphabet of entries arranged by surname, each entry including no more than name, occupation, business and home address. This was typically followed in turn by a few pages of additional names, removals, etc., to be inserted in the principal alphabet. A separate list of public buildings, churches, and incorporated institutions was supplied, and after 1824 this list included newspapers and periodicals. The proliferation of publications merited their collection under a separate heading starting in 1832.

A variety of other information might also appear. An “American Chronological Table”—a series of brief notes on important and remarkable events arranged by year—was frequently inserted as were notes on recent or proposed city legislation; rates of cartage, hackney carriages or pilotage; and summaries of census, tax or expenditure reports. In 1824, a “List of Streets,” keyed to a map separately published by Longworth, was introduced. This was replaced in 1828 with a “Runner’s Vade Mecum” (“comprising an extended list of all the streets, lanes, alleys, and slips in the city shewing their commence ment, progress, and termination, with the numbers of the houses at each corner, enabling a person to ascertain the precise location of almost every house in the city, so that same may be found by night as well as by day”) updated nearly each year during the 1830s. The Vade Mecum is so useful that we have reprinted as an appendix Longworth’s 1835 “Remarks on the Vade Mecum,” a compilation of name changes over several preceding years, and the 1842 Vade Mecum itself. Since many of the streets of lower Manhattan

¹Two supplementary sources of information regarding bookbinders were lists of the members of the NewYork Friendly Association of Master Book-Binders (1822) and the New-York Benevolent Association of Master Bookbinders (1835). These lists, and bibliographic information for them, appear in our index at “New-York.”
remain to this day, anyone with general knowledge of New York City will find the Vade Mecum nearly as useful as a period map.

Most volumes also included an “advertisement” of one or a few pages from the publisher. Longworth regularly explained the special pains he had taken to insure the completeness and accuracy of each year’s work; complained about the difficulties posed by the renaming and renumbering of streets, the growth of the city, incompetent canvassers, slow printers and ungrateful purchasers; urged purchase of the directory; and roundly condemned those who borrowed copies of the directory from others rather than purchasing their own. These amusing advertisements are now our principal means of reconstructing Longworth’s working procedures and of gauging the kinds of errors the directories contain.

Already in 1820 the largest city in the nation, the population of New York City would triple in a quarter-century. The third United States census enumerated the city’s population in that year at 123,706, while the 1845 New York State census recorded 371,223 city residents (180,472 males and 190,751 females), including 63,927 voters, 128,492 foreigners and 12,913 colored persons. Longworth’s Directory also grew during this period, but not so rapidly. Longworth reported the 1821 edition to contain about 23,870 entries; the 1841 only about 41,800. While the size of sheet and number of entries per page remained essentially constant over this time, the bulk of the book grew from 493 pages in 1821 to 760 in 1842.

There has been no full scale investigation of the way in which early directories were compiled, printed, distributed and used. In New York City, however, the process began in May, encouraged perhaps by a convention whereby landlords set rents for the coming year on February 1st with May 1st the removal date for tenants who could not or chose not to meet the new rates. The publisher hired canvassers to comb the city during May, collecting names, occupations and addresses which were put in alphabetical order by about June 1st, then set in type, printed, and bound for distribution in mid to late June. On occasion a mid-year supplement would be published. This was the case in 1835 when Longworth published a supplement listing more than one thousand relocations caused by the Great Fire that destroyed over 700 buildings in the city’s oldest ward.

While publishers’ advertisements suggest that the directories were intended to include all residents, this was never the case. Longworth’s principal focus seems to have been somewhere between employed persons and heads of household. He says in 1822, “The number of names obtained in a house is from 1 to 4; frequently in the upper part of town, from 4 to 8, and in many instances more than 8.”

Longworth attempted in 1829 to trim the directory’s “increasing bulk” by “judicious omission” of many names that “can be of no importance to persons in business, or to those that patronise the work; the names of laborers, colored people, [and] persons in low obscurity who rent tenements by the week or month.” Criticized for this in a newspaper editorial, in 1830 he advised readers that “the names of all persons doing business, heads of families whether journeyman or master mechanics, editors of newspapers, clerks, coloured people, gentlemen and commoners, are all indiscriminately inserted, without other distinction than that resulting from alphabetical arrangement.” Nothing more is known about how the judgements implied in these statements were translated into day to day practice. Still, the directories remain a vast reservoir of information.
FORMAT OF THE REGISTER

Data for the *Register* was abstracted from the directories and entered on a separate data card for each name. Mere transcription of Longworth’s entries, however, quickly proved impractical. Names varied in their fullness and spelling, initials and titles were present one year, absent another. Some names were linked from year to year by address, but most were not. While it must therefore be kept firmly in mind that the names collected have no necessary relation from appearance to appearance, nonetheless distinct and interesting men and women seemed to emerge as the data accumulated. We have recognized this tension by editing the transcribed information into entries which permit essentially full and accurate reconstruction of the original directory text.

The entry heading thus records the most frequent or latest spelling of surnames and the fullest form of forenames (including initials and titles such as “Jr.”, “Sr.”, or “Rev.”) while variations are indicated in the notes. We have, doubtless, from time to time conflated two or more individuals. This seems most likely to have occurred among those with more common names, and it should be possible for readers with information from other sources to disentangle individuals and to reconstruct accurate entries on the basis of the information we provide.

In some cases (see, for example, John J. Adams), where a name is relatively common and we have been unable to trace continuity on the basis of address, we have used the phrase “Name also appears [years]” to indicate the reader may find in the directories information we have not transcribed. The name “Adams,” to continue the example, appears in the directories each year from 1821 through 1842, but a “John J.” in only some years. Rather than the abbreviated version we provide, a full entry for the name John J. Adams would read:


*See also* Hunt & Adams.
26 Allen, 1823-26
185 Front, h. 26 Allen, 1827
241 Water, h. 38 Orchard, 1828
Fourth n. Thompson, 1829
20 Nassau, 1832
43 Nassau, 1833
107 Fulton, 1837
Lacks initial 1823-25. Accountant 1823-27; merchant 1828; no occupation 1829, 1833; N.Y. traveller 1832; broker 1837.

The choice and spelling of words denoting occupations likewise varied. We have silently normalized spelling for indexed occupations, again recording significant differences in the notes. We have expanded abbreviations, noting the directory text. Where a directory entry included the title of a periodical edited or published by an individual, we have included the title in the occupation field; further information is also nearly always found under the title of the periodical, a fact highlighted by our use of “(q.v.)” (quod vide). Square brackets indicate material we have supplied.

“See” and “See also” references have been liberally provided. We have tried diligently to identify all partnerships somewhat separated in the alphabet, and we have linked alphabetically separated entries for which we have noted a common address. Relationships within groups which share a surname sometimes become complex: see, for example, the Bartows, several members of a family which shared a number of overlapping enterprises. In such cases we have used the
formula “See all other entries for [surname]” to alert the reader to the difficulty of disentangling business relationships.

It is, indeed, characteristic of this period that families shared businesses on a variety of levels. We have recorded family members identified to occupations within scope of the Register when it seems they shared premises. We have not noted other possible or probable family relationships. Thus, for some purposes, there remains a good deal of useful information which can be gleaned from the directories. We have also not attempted to cross-match addresses systematically; this too might reveal relationships not cross-referenced here (though the practice of renaming and renumbering streets would diminish useful results).

The spelling of street names has been silently normalized to permit string-searching of a machine readable version of the text. It must be emphasized that street names were changed frequently in this period, and streets renumbered: a certain number of the apparent address changes we have recorded did not in fact result from actual removal to a new location. Readers interested in this level of detail will find the various editions of the “Runner’s Vade Mecum” helpful but may also be required to investigate city and other records.2

Adopting Longworth’s convention, the word “Street” is not printed, “but always understood.” Avenues, lanes, slips, alleys, etc. are consistently recorded; “h.” stands for “home,” “n.” for “near,” and “c.” for “corner.” A span of years following an address is, of course, inclusive. We have used a two-em dash (——) to indicate repetition of information given in the previous line. Lewis Adams, for example, is reported domiciled at 90 Spring Street from 1830 through 1840; in 1841 and 1842, the directories record a single address: 61 William.

Notes follow the order of the entry. Name variations are placed first (the phrase “Appears as . . .” is used only when ambiguity might otherwise result and should otherwise be understood). Variations in occupation are next noted; and finally notes from McKay and other sources. Within each subfield notes are ordered chronologically.

In the notes, the word “McKay” followed by a year or span of years indicates that an entry will be found under this form of name in McKay’s Register. As a convenience to those attempting to date a document or object on the basis of known address, we have indicated addresses recorded by McKay which carry into or past 1821. Thus an address followed by the span 1817-1823 indicates that McKay records this address for the years 1817-1820 and that we have found it continued to 1823. Again for the convenience of the reader, when McKay records only one or two addresses we have carried them over to our notes.

The Longworth directories alphabetted individuals by surname, then forename, with widows and firms, each separately alphabetted, following after. In many cases, however, names were entered one year as individual, another with “& Co.” Institutions, newspapers and periodicals were generally collected in lists presented in the rear-matter. Alphabetting of “M’”, “Mc”, and “Mac” varied.

2The Vade Mecums must be used critically, however. In the 1835 “Remarks on the Vade Mecum” reproduced as an appendix to this volume, Longworth comments on “Christie-street, formerly First-street. The name was changed March 24, 1827 [i.e. 1817], in honor of Lieutenant Colonel John Christie, who died on the frontier, July 22, 1813.” In the directories, however, the street most commonly appears “Chyrdie”, a spelling confirmed by the entry for John Chrystie in Francis B. Heitman, Historical Register of the United States Army . . . (Washington: GPO, 1903). Other numbered streets were also renamed for war heroes in 1817; a few years later, new streets, further uptown, were again given numbers.
A REGISTER OF THE NEW YORK CITY BOOK TRADES, 1821-42

We have thus only partially mirrored Longworth in the arrangement of entries. The forenames of those of the same surname are alphabetically arranged, ignoring "& Co." Firm names which do not include a forename are alphabetted after individuals. We have dispersed institutions, newspapers and periodicals alphabetically by the name or title given in the directories, but brought them together in the index. We have interfiled "M" and "Mc" but left "Mac" a separate series.

Since the spelling of names was anything but stable in this period, "See" references are provided for variant spellings which would alphabet differently than the selected form. Even so, those using the Register must be warned to investigate possible variant spellings with vigor and imagination. Longworth in 1832 advised those looking for the name "Pierce" to check also the spellings Paire, Pearce, Pearse, Peirse, Perce, Persse, and Pirce. Longworth was particularly inconsistent in his treatment of names beginning with "Van..." and, for example, Van Norden, VanNorden and Vannorden all appear. We have silently normalized to the "Vannorden" model.

COMPILATION OF THE REGISTER

One is rarely born with the ambition to read twenty-two city directories let alone abstract 5,000 names and 50,000 addresses from them, and this Register would not have existed save for the confluence of several events. In 1977, Douglas Wilson, Chicago bookseller, offered a small volume in a splendid presentation binding. Stamped on it were names and a date which made its manufacture in New York City in 1825 a virtual certainty. Although unsigned—few bookbindings of this period were signed—the principal stamp used to create the border was distinctive, and we thought it might prove possible to link it with other bindings. It seemed essential to start with a list of New York bookbinders active in 1825, and this led first to McKay's work and then to Longworth's. When the 1825 directory yielded a list of 66 bookbinders with a mere ten hours work, an extension of McKay seemed easily managed.

The University of Chicago Library (where we then worked) held a run of Longworth's Directory which lacked only the volume for 1840, and that volume was available in the Research Publications, Inc. microfiche edition of all American city directories listed in Dorothea N. Spear's Bibliography of American Directories Through 1860 (Worcester, MA: American Antiquarian Society, 1961). Thus the printed volumes were conveniently to hand during the evening and weekend hours we could make use of them.

The Register was edited from notes made during systematic, year-by-year reading of the directories beginning with that for 1821. A card was established for each name associated with an occupation related to the graphic arts. (All indexed occupations are listed at the beginning of the index.) This name was searched in all succeeding years, and all new addresses, occupations and variant spellings noted. Cross-references were established for all partnerships. When a man's name no longer appeared, the list of widows of the same surname was searched and probable relationships recorded.

Names first appearing with a graphic arts occupation in 1822 and later were checked back at least four years or to 1821, whichever came first. Individuals whose directory entries in earlier years did not include an occupation, or recorded an occupation not related to the graphic arts, in many cases could be linked by address to a later entry.
On the assumption that McKay was complete through 1820, names were not traced earlier than 1821. Every name in this Register which appears in McKay has been noted. No doubt, however, there are cases where a name first appears with a pertinent occupation in or after 1821 and also appears in directories prior to 1821 without occupation or with an occupation not noted by McKay. For this reason—and because McKay did not record home address when both business and home address were given—those interested in particular individuals are strongly advised to refer to the earlier directories.

Directories were published in 1842 and after by John Doggett, Charles R. Rode, John F. Trow and others, but we resisted the temptation to extend our work to them. First, continuing even to 1850 would have nearly doubled the size of this work. Second, while it seems likely these directory makers used methods similar to Longworth's, there is nonetheless an appropriate unity to what is offered here. Finally, after 1840 classified business directories were published regularly if not quite annually, and these give a direct access to firms competing in particular trades rarely available in earlier years.

Although the collection of our data was essentially complete by the spring of 1980—it required several thousand hours—this project might have languished in the form of five by eight inch data cards had not the rapid advance of computer technology eased conversion from cards to text. The Register's earliest electronic form was as twenty-page WordStar files on thirty 5.25 inch diskettes with the index, in several segments on other diskettes, managed by dBase I. These files have since been migrated through a half-dozen generations of software and increasingly dense storage mediums. Now, concatenated, they reside quite comfortably on a single 1.44MB diskette.

That diskette was communicated to John Lancaster, chair of the Publications Committee of the Bibliographical Society of America, who prepared from it the master files that, using the TeX typesetting program, produced both laser-printed proofs and, in the end, the high-resolution photographic output which formed the basis of printing plates for the edition now published. This was no passive role: John's experienced editorial hand, aided by his knowledgeable use of computer programs, has re-shaped our format, made entries consistent, forced the re-checking and re-working of many details, and designed the volume before you. Errors of omission and commission lodge with us; but we acknowledge with gratitude John Lancaster's accomplished midwifery.

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Tulsa, Oklahoma

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