



# Westerly's Witness

www.westerlyhistoricalsociety.org

January-February 2015

## Westerly Historical Society Officers 2014-2015

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<b>Babcock-Smith House Museum Liaison</b> Edward A. Fazio	

## At the Babcock-Smith House Museum: *The Changing World of Media*



By Betty-Jo Cugini Greene  
Former Channel 10 News Director

**Sunday, January 25, 2015, 2:00 P.M.**

**Presented in the Carriage House  
124 Granite Street  
Westerly, RI**

**Free to Museum Members  
Non-Members: \$2.00**

**To become a museum member visit  
<http://www.babcock-smithhouse.com>  
(Click on "Contact Us" → "Join.")**

## Calendar of Events

*Note: Events for the Westerly Historical Society 2015 calendar are scheduled to be announced by February 1, 2015.*

*Please watch your email for our events updates!  
The following events are sponsored by the Babcock-Smith House Museum.*

**February 8, 2015 2:00 PM**

### *"Tractors"*



**Harry and Maureen Bjorkland of the Rhode Island Antique Tractor Club will discuss the history of farm tractors and the growing hobby of collecting antique tractors.**

**February 22, 2015 2:00 PM**

### *"Data Protection and Backup in Personal Computing"*

**Presented by Christopher Allen**

**March 8, 2015 2:00 PM**

### *"Stonewalls"*

**Bruce Brawley will share his fascination with stone walls, a unique feature of the New England region.**

**The listed events will be presented at the Carriage House of the Babcock-Smith House Museum. Museum members admitted free; non-members: \$2.00.**

## Editor's Notes

Ann L. Smith

## "Westerly Bachelors" (Circa 1873)

Tom O'Connell, our newsletter editor emeritus, once again has come through with a wonderful piece of research on the "equestrian age" here in Westerly during the early part of the twentieth century. We hope you will all enjoy Part One of "Boots, Saddle, to Horse and Away!" this month's feature article.

We are delighted to announce that our new home at the Babcock-Smith House Museum carriage house is about finished. Jan Tunney, our archivist, is coordinating the transfer of our historical materials from the Westerly Public Library to our new space in the lower level of the carriage house. We wish to extend our gratitude to the library for the decades of service they have given us. Our relationship with the library covers most of the last 100 years from the times when our presenters offered programs there, to the storage of our materials, and to the personal assistance and liberal access to special collections the staff has afforded to our researchers over time.

Speaking of the archives, our newest addition to the Westerly Historical Society holdings is a collection of steamboat prints donated to us by WHS member, Carolyn Burkhardt. These wonderful, large, framed images were part of the décor at the Mermaid Café, which, sadly, has closed. We are planning a formal exhibit of these prints this spring in collaboration with the Babcock-Smith House Museum docents. Watch this space for details!

On behalf of the executive board, I want to encourage all our readers to explore some of this area's other historical societies. We have close ties with many of them and they all offer excellent programs. A full listing of local historical societies can be found at our website:

[www.westerlyhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.westerlyhistoricalsociety.org)

By now all members should have received their membership renewal letters. If you haven't done so already, please send your membership renewal check to:

**The Westerly Historical Society  
P.O. Box 91  
Westerly, RI 02891**

Individual membership is still \$20.00 per year; Family, \$30.00; Sustaining, \$50.00; Patron, \$100; and Benefactor, \$250.00 and over.

Lastly, I want to apologize to Lea Rockholz, Gloria Russell's daughter, who was referred to as Leah Rockwell in our last issue. We regret the error.

*Editor's note: We continue this anonymous piece from our last issue. We do not know the name of the publication in which it first ran, nor the date. It was published around 1873 judging by the ages of subjects mentioned. Our thanks to Dwight C. Brown for forwarding it.*

### **CHARLES PERRIN**

Here is a heavy weight who has waited until he could count 30 years of single blessedness, and yet there are no prospects of a wedding. He is good-looking, dresses well, and is at present studying law. He is a favorite with the fair sex, but as yet has made no particular choice.

### **EDWARD H. DIXON**

Is brother of the District Attorney, Nathan F. Dixon, Esq. He is about 26 years of age, spare features and of medium height. At present is practicing law. He is very fond of hunting, and delights to drive a good horse. His health has improved much of late, and it is hoped by his many friends that it will continue good. He has an easy, agreeable manner, and would make an excellent catch for some fair damsel.

### **ALBERT B. CRAFTS**

Is one of the firm of Peabody & Crafts, lawyers. He is of medium height, with light hair, and has a decided resemblance to the late Gen. Custer. He is a graduate of a Middleton College, about 28 years of age, and is said to be particularly fond of the girls. He has a good practice, which is constantly increasing, and why he does not marry is the all-absorbing question among the feminines [sic].

### **EDWARD HODGES**

This young man is about 24 years of age, and is noted for the neatness of his attire, and the smoothness of his face. Rumor has it he is trying most assiduously to raise a little down on the upper lip, but thus far with no success. He is of dark complexion, has light hair, is medium height, stout build, and very attentive to the ladies. He is a driver for Vose's stable near the depot. He likes to hold the ribbons over "Mac" his favorite bay. He has hosts of friends, and is in good circumstances, is old enough and ought to marry. It's a tough conundrum though to answer, whether he will or will not.

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## Boots, Saddle, to Horse and Away!

By Thomas A. O'Connell



**Second Annual Horse Show.** Horses, riders, spectators, and automobiles gather in a field across from the Watch Hill Riding and Polo Club (formerly the Oaks Inn) on Shore Road.  
(Photo: *Seaside Topics*.)

Just recently my friend, Jim McCormick, presented to me a solitary page from the August 20, 1976 issue of *Seaside Topics*. This summertime periodical had been a staple of Watch Hill readers since 1904 until its demise in late 1970s. (*Ocean Views* succeeded *Topics*.) The top half of the page was dominated by a photo of the Watch Hill Riding and Polo Club said to have been located on Shore Road across from the Winnapaug Day Camp. The Camp used to set up operations in the level land on the water side of Shore Road.

Sporting a slightly British accent the writer announced ONE LAST CHUKKER\* AND ALL THAT. "In the days before the depression and confiscatory taxes, no summer community worth its sparkling reputation lacked a polo field and Watch Hill was no exception...The Watch Hill Riding and Polo Club was a hub of activity in the twenties and early thirties," the caption boasted.

Well, I drove up and down Shore Road in the area indicated, but could find no evidence of the club's existence. That caused me to cloister myself in the local history rooms on the second floor of the Westerly Public Library. The library has a great collection of both hardbound and loose copies of *Seaside Topics*, which published about 13 issues per season. By chance, I happened upon the 1928 issue, where first notice of the "Club" was found...

It seems that the 1920s Watch Hill folk thought that having fun was serious business. There was no lack of sports: sailing, tennis, golf, swimming, baseball, yachting, and so on filled their summer days. No one had time to relax, there was too much fun to enjoy. A June, 1928 *Seaside Topics* article made this disdainful comment on the current state of affairs...

\* **Chukker**- Any of the periods of play, each lasting 7½ minutes, into which a polo match is divided. *Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 1985.

The horse has been coming back at an amazing rate. Of course, he was never forgotten by a large portion of society whose leisure time and ample means enabled them to continue paying court to him while the automobile has lost its novelty. It is now much more of a necessary convenience and less of a sporting luxury. The roads are so well filled with cars of all descriptions that it cannot any longer be considered a mark of distinction to ride along in even the most luxurious.

That thoughtful attitude was apparently shared by a group of 50 and more Watch Hill summer residents who agreed with the need for "safe place to ride." These deep-pocketed citizens discussed the issue at length and arrived at a plan of action. They formed a new sporting venue – The Watch Hill Riding and Polo Club. Some of the notable charter members were Hunter S. Marston, Frederick Roosevelt, Mrs. Louise deK. Phelps, and banker, Richard Beatty Mellon.

The club signed a lease on a 1, 200 acre tract of land. Within that expanse, 15 miles of carefully cleared bridle paths were mapped. The horseback riders could follow the bridle paths or could ride into woods and fields. The option was there to ride on different trails every other day. These sequestered paths wound through the pastoral countryside on the north side of Shore Road and east of Watch Hill.

The club had built a new stable for 30 horses or more which was completed before the opening of the 1928 season. Members paid a fee to use the spacious horse stalls, tack and feed rooms along with other facilities which would soon be added.

In this new stable fresh hay was loaded and stored in the space above the horse stalls so that the hungry animals could be fed with measured forkfuls. Grain

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## Boots, Saddle, to Horse, and Away!

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was kept in a separate storage space. There were several out buildings used for storage. The requisite blacksmith shop was located at a safe distance from the hay-filled stable.

The stable and out-buildings were painted green with orange trimmings. On the outer wall of each of the stalls was posted the horse's name and its owner. As the club fostered a home-like atmosphere, Tuffy, a tiger cat, became the stable mascot and mouse catcher. Some of the horses bore names – Star, Betty, Black Eagle, and Killarney. There were also a few Scotch ponies, reserved for the youngsters called Molly, Sandy, Jean, Bessie, and Dick.

William Olsen was signed on as the Club's riding master. An avuncular man, John O'Connor, became the head groom and assistant riding master. It was O'Connor who introduced members and their offspring to the horses. Other grooms and stall muckers performed the less glamorous tasks. A generous riding ring, for riding lessons, was erected the following year not too distant from the stable.



**Riding Master William C. Olsen (l) and Head Groom, John O'Connor, prepared these four horses for some club members who would ride in that day's paper chase. (Photo: Seaside Topics.)**

The Club signed a ten-year lease on the former Oaks Inn on Shore Road. This building was renamed the Riding Club Lodge. Rooms could be rented and meals were served. Mrs. Lina J. Phillips operated the Riding Club Lodge and Chef Henry Giglio, formerly of the Ocean House, served "high class" cuisine. Charles F. Hammond, who also sang baritone with the Watch Hill Chapel Quartet, was the club secretary. It was to himself that all enquiries about the Lodge and membership were addressed. *Polo was not yet mentioned as a club activity.*

The following year (1929) the Watch Hill Riding and Polo Club began the season with Calvert B. Cottrell III as its president. Club policy seemed to contain a tacit imperative that some new activity or building had to be created at least annually to sustain that institution's viability in Watch Hill's social structure.

To fulfill that unspoken mandate two significant additions were made to the club property that season. The Riding Club Lodge, formerly the Oaks Inn, was enlarged by a wrap-around A-winged porch with modernized sliding windows which allowed members to luxuriate in the cool afternoon ocean breezes which swept up the hill. The heat and salty sweat of the trails were soon vanquished. On a clear day, porch dwellers could behold an uninterrupted view of the ocean. Those with binoculars saw the grasses sway in the fields below and the boats sailing on Brightman's Pond in the distance.

The crowning achievement of the 1929 season was the opening of the Tea Garden. And, because the Tea Garden was bordered by a dramatic horseshoe-shaped hedge of evergreen shrubs and variegated flowers, folks later in the season dubbed it the Horseshoe Tea Garden. The horseshoe-shaped hedge itself guarded a specially groomed green lawn. Dotting this verdant expanse were tables, chairs, and umbrellas. The tables and chairs were painted orange and green and shaded by striped green and orange canvas cloth sun stoppers. To a passerby on the dusty Shore Road the Riding Club's Horseshoe Tea Garden and L-shaped porch must have appeared as an oasis of pastoral calm and genteel relaxation.

Languishing under those protective umbrellas were the equestrians and their companions. Women riders were easily identified by their tall black field boots (brown was considered a peasant hue). White or cream jodhpurs, dusty or not, rose from the top of



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## Boots, Saddle, to Horse, and Away!

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the boots to circle the waist. A white blouse, closed at the neck by a colorful scarf, was secured with a brooch or large ornamental pin with a clasp. A fitted red or black jacket completed the ensemble. To protect her hands, she still would be wearing fine leather gloves whose back of the hand was crocheted to shield the delicate skin from the burning sun and yet allow some ventilation while guiding her steed. The thin gloves were *de rigueur*. The whole outfit might be topped by a hat with a chin strap of her choosing. Some women would eschew headgear entirely. Other people enjoying this oasis would be clad in tennis or yachting togs, or the accepted summer street attire.

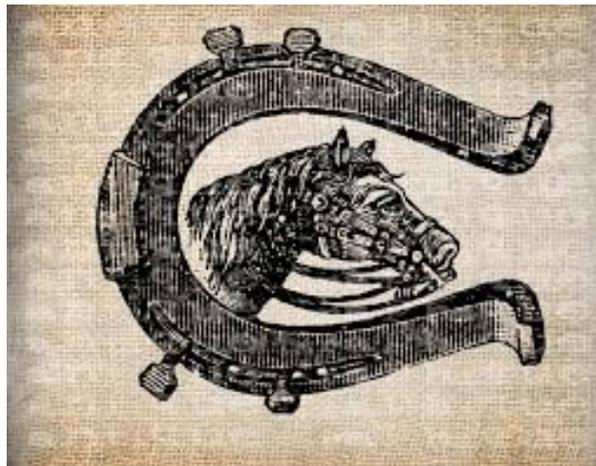
The men equestrians were dressed in a manner similar to the women, except that some might wear white jackets. Appearing at the neck of the men's shirts, they would sport an ascot or scarf with very broad ends hanging from a knot. Their outfit was completed with a black velvet top hat with a chin strap. On some tables, too, were riding crops.

The bill of fare served at the Horseshoe Tea Garden featured hot and cold teas, (Prohibition was the law) assorted sandwiches, cakes for 75 cents, and biscuits with honey and tea, also 75 cents. Soft drinks such as orangeade, colas, root beer, ginger ale and the like bottled by White Rock Beverage Company and refreshments of the Canada Dry brand were available.



Miss Denise O'Brien and her brother, Robert, the children of Mr. and Mrs. Dennis O'Brien as they appeared at the Watch Hill Riding and Polo Club's Second Annual Horse Show.

(Photo: *Seaside Topics*.)



The Horseshoe Tea Garden was not without occasional problems. There was the afternoon when Sandy, a little white pony who felt that she had a grievance because she had been cooped in her stall for too long without use, suddenly broke free. She made a run for the roses, the ones which gave the horseshoe its color. There was a great hubbub among the tea partiers. Tables were knocked over, chairs emptied, and umbrella ribs were cracked. To the rescue came a young unflustered groom, Albion Tattersall, who calmly slipped a halter over Sandy's head and led the thwarted filly back to her stall.

In downtown Westerly some astute businessmen were quick to detect an opportunity for commerce. A custom tailor, G. Pasquale Toscano, bought advertising space in **Seaside Topics**. He offered to make custom riding habits to order. "Just stop in at 22 Canal Street."

A tea garden feeds the body and slakes thirsts. One is amused by subdued conversations uttered by friends and acquaintances. Riding fifteen miles of trails in the hot sun is a hoot, but a horse can canter that distance is a fairly short time. So, where's the much sought after competition members craved? The bragging rights, you know.

And so it came to pass that Club Riding Master William Olsen and his assistant, John O'Connor, decided to offer their clientele another attraction: The Paper Chase. The Paper Chase is simplicity in action. Preparation for it started the night before the actual race. A club member, perhaps, Mr. Cottrell himself, would ride all about the 1,200 acres distributing square white pieces of paper. Most would later be found on the ground or several were

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## **Boots, Saddle, to Horse, and Away!**

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attached to trees. Keen-eyed riders were sent out the next morning in measured groups when harkened to the morning's chase by the command:

### **BOOTS, SADDLE, TO HORSE, AND AWAY!!!**

barked by the Riding Master at the stable where they had been marshaled after breakfast.

The chase was on!!! Over fences, around boulders, uphill, a plunge to its depths, a collision with another mount, a fall from the saddle, bumps, bruises. That was all part of the excitement of the "chase." The first lucky horseman or horsewoman to find the paper bag galloped back to the stable to claim the prize. The paper bag itself might contain "a worthwhile prize that could be used by either sex." Those prizes which were donated by individual club members were both elegant and prosaic. Miss Denise O'Brien, who stabled her personal horses at the Lodge stable, won "a handsome silver cigarette box with an appropriate design on the cover – a stage coach with prancing steeds." Some other prizes included a bronze miniature horse statue, and a fly whip tied with orange and blue streamers.

Adults paper-chased in the mornings at about 10:30. The races were extremely popular because of the intricacies choreographed into the landscape, which the especially experienced equestrians found maddening to follow.

Eventually problems developed as when a posse of 10-12 adult trotters clustered together at one spot simultaneously. Animals, dust, swishing horse tails, frightened horses, biting mounts, some stable language and riding crops filled the hellish scene. At that point, some angry frustrated rider would yell, "Spread out, spread out!" And the fevered chase would resume.

For safety's sake, the children's paper chases were conducted in the afternoon, around 2:30 p.m. The children could expect their efforts to produce toys, boxes of candies, and some articles of riding tack equipment. Later in the afternoon, (4-6 p.m.) the youngsters were attracted to dances held on the wide veranda of the Riding Club Lodge. Live music was performed by Eddie Whittstein's orchestra, a Yale favorite.

And there was more activity added that year, 1929. The Club announced two horse shows. "The first will take place in the latter part of July and the second one will be just before Labor Day." Both horse shows would be staged "in a large field (later the Winnapaug Day Camp) to the south of the [Shore] road opposite to the Riding Club Lodge." These horse shows would be staged for the next couple of years, but not always on Shore Road.

The members' children, too, had their day, a field day "which features a wild-west melodrama to rival some of Tom Mix's movies" was sometimes held. There were games to challenge the boys' and girls' abilities such as a potato race (can't picture that one), riding without stirrups, jumping bars raised to 3 feet 6 inches, a race riding one horse while leading another horse, apple spearing, carrying an egg on a spoon, the mount and dismount version of musical chairs while riding, and more.

The children had parts in the melodrama wild-west thriller, "Wild Nell, Sweetheart of the Plains." The youngsters dressed up as Indians daubed all over with war paint, wrapped in blankets and feathers, all the time whooping many war whoops and screaming fierce war cries to the cadence of a large painted war drum.

Those activities closed a very lively season at the Watch Hill Riding and Polo Club. *Polo was not yet mentioned as a Club activity.*



The former Oaks Inn was renamed the Watch Hill Riding Club Lodge. Horseback riding and its famous Horseshoe Tea Garden drew crowds to this Shore Road site in the late 1920s and early 1930s. (Photo: *Seaside Topics*.)

*(Coming in March, Part Two: Competition, Change, and the End of an Era.)*

Westerly Bachelors

*(continued from page 2)*

### **DWIGHT STILLMAN**

Is a young man of good reputation is about 29 years of age, lives at home, and is highly esteemed by all who know him. He is of medium height, fair build, rather brownish hair and sports an immense pair of side whiskers. Is interested with his father in the carriage manufactory on High street, drives a nice team, and is also interested in fast horses, as he may be seen at each meeting of the Westerly Driving Park association, holding his timer in hand as the horses go under the wire. It is a wonder that he has escaped the nuptial knot thus far, but when it becomes better known that such an upright, honest and virtuous young man is a resident of Westerly. The boys may expect to be called upon soon to "put out" for a wedding gift. Girls have an eye on him.

### **CHARLES SEGAR**

Is a bachelor aged 23, medium height, good build, dark hair, dark complexion, smooth face. Is clerk for his father in the grocery business on Broad street, near the bridge, and he likes a good time. Drives a nice team, is a fine fellow, steady, and ought to marry.

### **LESTER BURDICK**

Lester is the son of one of our former respected elders. He is about 26 years of age, very stout and pulls down the beam at 240 pounds. He formerly studied dentistry with Messrs. Lewis & Spicer, but after two years gave it up and now is contented to keep a cigar store.

### **AMOS DOUGLASS**

Amos has seen 27 years roll by and not taken any advantage of his numerous chances to marry. He is of medium build, of the blonde order, dresses well, and at present interested with his father in the livery business on Canal street. He generally passes the summer at Newport, but business obliged him to remain at home the past season.

### **DAVID HENRY BRYANT**

A nice young gentleman and enterprising young bachelor, not yet quite out of the "teens," but old in knowledge, handsome, agreeable, no bad habits, has recently drawn a very valuable good watch and chain in the Kentucky lottery, through his "New York brokers," has besides, plenty of the needful laid away,

and in brief, ladies, is a splendid catch, so look out for him, and don't let him escape. Dresses right up to the handle, and is at present engaged in the news business with the well known and popular Foster, where he handles lots of the "TELEGRAMS" every Saturday afternoon. "David Henry" is a blonde, of course. "Who will be the lucky young lady?"

### **CHARLES H. HOXIE**

Charley, better known as "Uncle Bial" and "Grandfather Joshua," is a nice young bachelor of about 22 years, -- a blonde, with dark hair and black eyes; at present engaged in the market business with Messrs. Davis & Woodburn, of West Broad street. He is quite handsome, has very winning and agreeable ways, attends church regular at the Methodist every Sunday evening, rain or shine, has no bad habits to speak of, and although rather bashful, and of quite a jealous disposition, seems to enjoy the society of the ladies very much. With all of his attractions and popularity, "Uncle Bial" ought to be the head of a family.

### **EDWARD H. BRYANT**

A handsome young bachelor of about 22 summers, well formed, 5 feet 10 inches high, and tips the scales at 180. Dresses well, sports a knobby little moustache, and costly silk handkerchiefs, drives a good team quite often, and we have no doubt is entirely competent to make a home happy. Is brother to David Henry, of Kentucky lottery fame, has been in the livery stable business at Watch Hill, R. I., during the past summer season, and is at present engaged in the same here, at John Pendleton's old stand, High street. Report states that a certain young lady "over the river," holds his heart a captive, but no one can vouch for it, so don't be discouraged, ladies, but go in, and win.

### **BYRON J. PECKHAM**

An attractive young bachelor of about 25. By occupation, a carpenter, and as yet, reported to be heart free. No bad habits, and an eligible catch fair ladies, so attend to him, and trap him if you can. Resides on Mechanic street, but can be seen on Elm street quite often. Although reported to be still heart free, it is rather doubted, and thought that your favorite initials would look very nicely on a wedding cake. "Ah, he's a sly one, ladies," so watch him sharp and closely, or you will lose him.

*(To be continued in March, 2015)*

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED  
The Westerly Historical Society  
P.O. Box 91  
Westerly, RI 02891



ONE LAST BACHELOR – EDGAR H. COTTRELL

*Edgar is a gushing brunette of 27, and sports an immense dark moustache. His affections are centered on no lady in particular. He is of medium height, good build, steady, with no bad habits, popular, dresses well, affable and pleasant in manners and as he has abundant means to support a fine establishment, it is a wonder to many why he does not marry. Is interested in the firm of Cottrell & Babcock, machinists, on Mechanic street, and doing a driving business. Girls look out for him, he is a good catch.*

Edgar H. Cottrell rightly followed in his father's footsteps. The Cottrell & Babcock company reorganized as C.B. Cottrell and Sons Co. in 1880 following the retirement of partner Nathan Babcock. Edgar H. Cottrell eventually served as president of the company which continued to produce a wide line of printing presses throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. C. B. Cottrell and Sons became a subsidiary of the Harris-Seybold Company (later the Harris Corporation) in 1953.

Edgar Cottrell finally did marry, taking Leona Balfe of Smith Falls, Ontario as his wife in 1907.

He is known for perfecting his father's rotary printing process for magazines and introduced multiple-color printing to the magazine industry. He died in New York City on March 7, 1922.

Although we could not find an image of Edgar Cottrell, we thought you might enjoy a sketch of one of the early Cottrell & Babcock printing presses as it is shown below.

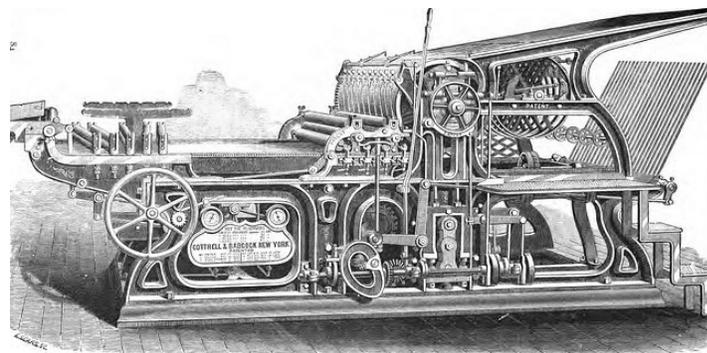


FIG. 2.—COTTRELL & BABCOCK'S NEW TWO-REVOLUTION PRINTING PRESS.