A STUDY OF PRE-CONFEDERATION ONTARIO BOOKBINDING

The binding of books is a craft, an art and an industry. The craft of bookbinding combines a knowledge of materials, a familiarity with traditional workmanship and manual skills developed through practice. The art of bookbinding is the application of these skills to produce an object of beauty or gratify a current taste. Bookbinding as an industry is closely allied to printing, publishing and other aspects of the book trade. As a commercial activity it is also linked to the manufacture and distribution of necessary supplies: paper, cloth, leather, metal for tools and gold and colour for decoration.

Bookbinding as practised in Upper Canada and Canada West before the formation of the Province of Ontario at Confederation in 1867 conforms to the above definition although craft, art and industry are not always evident in equal measure during the period.

Upper Canada was created in 1791; the earliest examples of printing in the province date from 1793. Its first novel was published in 1824 and the first book of verse a year later. The date of the earliest bookbinding is still a matter of conjecture but examples from the third decade are documented. The period under discussion then is approximately fifty years and it encompasses developments from pioneer coverings of calico or linen over scabboard to the publishers' edition bindings of the industrial age. It can be seen as the history of bookbinding reduced to the span of a single binder's working life.

The obvious place to begin a study of bookbinding is with the bindings themselves, the physical evidence of books published in pre-Confederation Ontario. This study has included the collections of the Metropolitan Toronto Central Library (formerly the Central Reference Library of Toronto Public Libraries), the Rare Books and Special Collections of the University of Toronto, the Hamilton Public Library and the Kitchener Public Library including the collection of the Waterloo Historical Society.¹ Several antiquarian booksellers have also permitted study of Ontario bindings in their stock: Joseph G. Sherlock and Hugh Anson-Cartwright of Toronto and Guy Andrus of Kitchener.

The list of collections still to be visited, both in Toronto and further afield, is long, but the strength of those already surveyed provides a basis for this preliminary report and a foundation for further research.

¹ Bindings in these collections will be indicated by symbols:

Metropolitan Toronto Central Library – TMCL

Rare Books and Special Collections of the University of Toronto – TRB

Hamilton Public Library – HPL

Kitchener Public Library – KPL

Waterloo Historical Society – WHS

An examination of bindings of early Ontario imprints raises many questions. Were these books actually bound here or were they sent to British and American binders? If binders were at work in Upper Canada and Canada West when and where were they active, and what materials were available? Some answers can be found in the commercial directories published throughout the province, beginning in the 1830s in York, in the 1850s in Hamilton, London and Kingston and spreading through the counties in the 1860s. Forty-nine such directories have been consulted and many binders identified. Their advertisements in the directories provide fascinating details about materials, styles of binding and business practices.

Binders also advertised their skills by means of the ticketed or signed binding, described by A.N.L. Munby as "a document in the history of one of the minor arts."² The ticket is usually a small paper label printed with the name and address of the binder and glued on the front endpaper, less frequently on the back. The Ontario tickets are often interesting as samples of design as well as sources of information. Green, pink and blue paper was used in addition to white, and various type faces and ornaments decorate the postage stamp-sized tickets. In some instances of ticketed bindings the binder dispensed with the printed label and stamped his name directly on the endpapers. The search for a binder's name should begin with the endpapers but not end there. Exceptions justify a careful examination of every binding; for example, one Ontario binding is stamped with the binder's name at the foot of the spine³ and the binder of another volume is identified on the verso of the title page.⁴

A further source for documentation of Ontario bookbinding is the traveller's tale. These popular accounts are mines of information about life in the early days of the province. Thomas Rolph, describing Berlin (now Kitchener) in 1836 reported that "this village, which has risen into existence within the last two or three years, already numbers many industrious mechanics such as . . . a bookbindery and also a printing office."⁵

The annual Provincial Fair, inaugurated in Toronto in 1846, included bookbinding among its competitive classes beginning with the fourth fair in 1849. The records from 1856 on are particularly useful in the compilation of a directory of Ontario binders since the name of each winner is listed, as well as category and prize.⁶

The 1851 Census is a further proof of the active presence of bookbinders. Among "Professions, Trades and Occupations" fifty-one bookbinders are re-

² A.N.L. Munby, "Collecting English Signed Bindings," *The Book Collector*, 2 (Autumn, 1953), p. 177.

³ *Great Western Railway Gazetteer, Commercial Advertiser and Business Directory, 1861-62* (Toronto: W.C. Chewett & Co., 1861) TRB.

⁴ *Sutherland's County of Oxford Gazetteer and Directory, 1862-63* (Ingersoll: James Sutherland, 1862) Courtesy J.G. Sherlock.

⁵ Thomas Rolph, *A Brief Account* (Dundas: G. Heyworth Hackstaff, 1836), pp. 230-231.

⁶ Upper Canada. Board of Agriculture. *Transactions*. 1846-68 (6 vols.; Toronto: Agriculture and Arts Association of Ontario, 1856-72).

corded: twenty-five in Toronto, nine in Hamilton, three each in London and Kingston, one each in Lennox and Peel counties, two in Ontario, three in Northumberland and four in Waterloo.⁷ Ten years later the binding fraternity had increased to eighty-six with thirty-five from Toronto, fifteen from Hamilton, seven from Kingston and two each from Ottawa and London. The remaining twenty-five were spread over thirteen counties.⁸

The number of bookbinders working in Ontario before 1867, gathered from all these sources, totals over two hundred, active in thirty-four towns and cities.

The dependence on directories for names and dates of activity is not without hazard as other compilers have remarked.⁹ Surely Samuel Borrett, Samuel Borret and Samuel Barrett binding in Toronto in the 1850s and '60s are one man and Henry Copp and Henry Cowp of Alexander Street, Toronto, are easily reconciled, but other puzzles remain unsolved.

Many of the bookbinders whose activities have been recorded were stable in their practice of the craft. Richard Cuthbert, for example, appears consistently in the York and Toronto directories from 1833 to 1867, the terminal date of this study. Other binding careers of ten, fifteen and twenty years were not uncommon. For most regions of the province however, it is difficult to be sure of continued activity since directory coverage was sporadic during the period under study. For example, an advertisement placed by Thomas McAuley of Kingston in 1864 notes the date of establishment of his bindery as 1834.¹⁰ No directories are available to verify this date.

Within a city or town bookbinders were very mobile, often moving house or shop every couple of years. Movement from one city to another, however, seems to have been rare. Simon Harrison, who worked in Toronto in the late '30s and early '40s and who reappears in Cobourg during the '50s and '60s is an exception. Another observable trait of these Ontario craftsmen is their tendency to make bookbinding a family affair. The three Brown brothers advertised independently before merging, over one hundred and ten years ago, into a firm which still binds books in Toronto. The Lafrance family with four binders, Victor, Louis, Antoine and Amboise was active in both Toronto and Ottawa from 1859. A male monopoly of the binding trade is indicated thus far in the study since no female binders have been found. Perhaps Ontario's own Jane Aitken will yet be discovered. There is one example of a widow, Mrs. Hugh Scobie, continuing as a business partner after her husband's death, but no evidence that she was involved in binding.

⁷Province of Canada. Board of Registration and Statistics. *Census of the Canadas, 1851-52* (2 vols.; Quebec: John Lovell, 1853-55) I, 507.

⁸Province of Canada. Department of Agriculture and Statistics. *Census of the Canadas, 1860-61* (2 vols.; Quebec: S.B. Foote, 1863-64) I, 560.

⁹Harry Glenn and Maude O. Brown, *A Directory of the Book-Arts and Book Trade in Philadelphia to 1820* (New York: New York Public Library, 1950), pp. 4-6; Charles Ramsden, *Bookbinders of the United Kingdom (Outside London) 1780-1840* (Privately printed, 1954), p. xiv.

¹⁰*Mitchell's Canadian Gazetteer and Business Directory for 1864-65* (Toronto: W.C. Chewett & Co., 1864), p. 292.

Many of the bookbinders whose names appear in the directories combined several occupations. They were usually employed in other branches of the publishing and printing trade. Bookseller, stationer, blank book manufacturer, printer, publisher, lithographer and engraver all appear in combination with bookbinder. The sale and hanging of wallpaper seems also to have been a suitable second trade. Others which are listed include shoemaker, photographer, picture frame maker, librarian, postmaster and town warden. Two mayors, William Buell of Brockville and John Creighton of Kingston can be counted as bookbinders since both advertised binding through their stationery stores.

The advertisements placed by bookbinders in almanacs, gazetteers and directories are of considerable interest. Stephen Hewson of Hamilton promised in 1853:

In all cases, the very best of Stock and Workmanship, with strength and beauty combined, may be depended upon. Having a large number of Hands constantly employed, Customers may rely upon getting their work punctually at the time ordered.¹¹

Henry Rowsell advertising in Toronto in 1850 summed up with: "Every description of binding executed in a superior manner, and at moderate prices."¹² Another Toronto binder, Hugh Scobie, made a similar appeal: "Book-binding in all its Branches, got up in the best manner, in superior style, and on moderate terms."¹³

Some binders in the larger centres attempted to attract business from rural areas and from others in the book trade. One firm advertising in Toronto was Brown Brothers:

Bookbinding executed in a manner which for style, durability and cheapness, cannot be surpassed. Bookbinding for Publishers, Public Libraries, &c., at very Low Rates. Country merchants and the trade dealt with on the most Liberal Terms.¹⁴

Lovell and Gibson also offered long-distance binding: "N.B. Orders from the Country for Printing and Binding are respectfully solicited, which will be immediately attended to, and forwarded by Express."¹⁵ James McAuley advertised to potential customers from his Kingston shop: "P.S. Orders from a distance Punctually attended to."¹⁶

¹¹ *Directory for Hamilton and Dundas* (Hamilton: *Spectator* Office, 1853), p. 127.

¹² *Rowsell's City of Toronto & County of York Director for 1850-1* (Toronto: Henry Rowsell, 1850), p. 151.

¹³ *Canadian Mercantile Almanac* (Toronto: Hugh Scobie, 1846), back cover.

¹⁴ *Great Western Railway Gazetteer, Commercial Advertiser and Business Directory, 1861-62*, p. 86.

¹⁵ *Grand Trunk Railway Gazetteer, 1862-63* (Toronto: W.C. Chewett & Co., 1862), p. 106.

¹⁶ *Sutherland's General Directory for the City of Kingston for 1867* (Kingston: James Sutherland, 1866), p. 105.

Binders in the towns and smaller cities of Ontario attempted to counter this centralization of the trade by emphasizing the quality of the work to be had from local craftsmen. A London binder assured his customers in 1856, “none but first class workmen employed.”¹⁷ And Woodstock in 1862 was favoured with the presence of a “Practical Bookbinder, of over thirty years experience, in the first shops in England, and the United States.”¹⁸

In describing the stock available to their customers, some binders have left invaluable records of the trade. In 1861 Brown Brothers supplied “leathers, cloths, marble papers, Mill and Straw Boards, and every description of binders’ stock, imported directly from the Manufacturers.”¹⁹ The leathers available to a Hamilton customer in 1853 were “turkey, morocco, russia, and English calf, and especially those unique and economical half-calf and half-morocco styles.”²⁰ In London in 1856 one could have had “Sheep, Turkey, Morocco or Cloth Binding, Plain or Gilt.”²¹ And in 1862 at another London bindery customers could choose among “calf, morocco, Russia, or Roan, plain, gilt, or antique.”²²

An especially interesting advertisement is one printed by Henry and William Rowsell on the back cover of their *West Canada Almanac* in 1843.²³ They listed a wide range of stationery including “cakes of color” and “ox gall in pots”, the main ingredients for marbling on paper. In the same advertisement they offered “brass and other door plates made to order”, an indication that they could probably have cast and engraved bookbinders’ tools. It seems likely, however, that most tools were imported. In 1857 for example, the *Tables of the Trade and Navigation of the Province of Canada* recorded the value of “Book Binders Tools – Presses and Implements” imported as: £1,398.16s.11d. of which £546 came from Great Britain, the rest from the United States.²⁴ Even after a division of this total between the two Districts of the Province of Canada, Canada East and Canada West, this represents a considerable expenditure.

The evidence of Ontario imprints in old bindings, the established presence of many active bookbinders in the region and assurance of their access to necessary materials does not guarantee that every such binding on an Ontario book is an original binding, produced in the province at the time of publication or within a

¹⁷ *Railton's Directory for the City of London, C.W., 1856-57* (London: Geo. Railton, 1856), p. 273.

¹⁸ *County of Oxford Gazetteer and General Business Directory for 1862-3* (Ingersoll: James Sutherland, 1862), p. 233.

¹⁹ *Great Western Railway Gazetteer, Commercial Advertiser and Business Directory, 1861-62*, p. 86.

²⁰ *Directory for Hamilton and Dundas*, p. 127.

²¹ *Railton's Directory for the City of London, C.W., 1856-57*, p. 273.

²² *Tackabury Brothers' Canadian Advertising Directory* (London: City Press Office, 1862), p. 42.

²³ *The West Canada Almanac* (Toronto: H. & W. Rowsell, 1843), back cover.

²⁴ *Tables of the Trade and Navigation of the Province of Canada for the Year 1857* (Toronto: Stewart Derbishire and George Desbarats, 1858), pp. 110-111.

few years of that date. Further proof is needed and can be gained from the accumulation and combination of data from various sources.

The binder's ticket discussed earlier proves where a book was bound but not when, unless it is possible to ascribe a definite date to some of the information on the ticket. The renaming of York as Toronto is a perfect example and two ticketed bindings, one by "Stanton, Binder"²⁵ and the other by "R. Brewer, Book Binder,"²⁶ both with York as address date these bindings firmly as pre-1834.

Signatures, marks of ownership and notes of dedication and presentation, when accompanied by date, generally prove that the binding was complete at the time of inscription. Many owners and donors of Ontario imprints did sign and date books, usually on the endpapers, also on title pages and covers. Some textbooks are signed many times recording their passage through a family with younger students outdoing their siblings in both number of signatures and calligraphic flourish per signature. Added notes about price and the circumstances of purchase accompany some marks of ownership and are useful for details of the book trade in early Ontario.

The value of dated notes can be illustrated by one example. Lillie's 1855 *Canada* is commonly found in a dark brown fine-ribbed cloth binding, gold stamped on the front cover with a rather furtive beaver. A letter dated September first, 1855, glued to the flyleaf of one copy, from Adam Lillie presenting the copy "published today" to W. G. Allan, Mayor of Toronto, confirms the assumption that this is the original binding in which the book was issued.²⁷ This letter was found in the fourth almost identical copy of that title examined, proving how necessary it is to compare the bindings on as many copies of an imprint as possible. Identical or similar bindings do indicate a common origin and date.

Different bindings of the same imprint can also be significant. Before mechanization of the binding process made uniformity economical a title could be issued by the publisher or bound to the order of a purchaser in any one of a number of styles at various prices, full leather being the most costly material, paper the least. A title can thus be found in totally different bindings which cannot be reconciled either one to another or to the date of the imprint. In some instances though there are clues in a close observation of materials. Two copies of a report on civil rights tentatively dated 1826 have been examined. One copy was bound in an unusual rosy-tan calf.²⁸ The second copy, half calf and marble paper with a leather label,²⁹ was bound with leather identical in colour and

²⁵ Upper Canada. House of Assembly. *Journal*. 1830 (York: William Lyon Mackenzie, 1830) TRB.

²⁶ Upper Canada. House of Assembly. *Journal*. 1831 (York: John Carey, 1831) TRB.

²⁷ Adam Lillie, *Canada: Physical, Economic and Social* (Toronto: Maclear & Co., 1855) Courtesy J.G. Sherlock.

²⁸ Upper Canada. Legislative Council. *Report, &c of the Hon. Legislative Council on the Civil Rights of Certain Inhabitants* (York? : John Carey, 1826?) TMCL.

²⁹ TRB.

finish to that of the first copy, no doubt cut from the same skin and bound by the same skilled hands.

The final and usual method of dating bindings is by style including observation of workmanship, materials and decoration. The evidence gathered from dated bindings, from trends identified in Great Britain and the United States and gradually accumulated by studying Ontario bindings has shaped a preliminary guide to the styles of binding carried out in Upper Canada and Canada West.

The simple coverings of thin paper glued along the spine or over the endpapers of pamphlets, first glued or stabbed and sewn, are scarcely bookbindings but many Ontario examples have survived. The front of the wrapper is usually printed with a reproduction of the title page in a decorative frame of typographical ornaments. Various colours of paper were used including yellow, orange, pink, buff, mauve, blue, green and grey.

More durable bindings were made of paper over boards, the boards being pasteboard, mill or straw boards, or in some instances, thin wooden boards known as scabbard. The spine joining these boards was usually leather in the 1820s and cloth in the following decade. The paper most often chosen was unglazed, rather like blotting paper, and the usual colour a medium blue although tan, ivory, sulphur yellow and deep green examples have been seen. Glazed paper is found occasionally as well. The covers of these paper on board bindings are usually plain or labelled with printed paper or tooled leather. Reproduction of the title page in the tradition of pamphlet wrappers is exceptional, as in the case of a ticketed Brewer binding with the title page printed on glossy, buff paper covering the boards of an 1837 government publication.³⁰

This style of paper on boards fell from general use after about 1840 except for two types of books: directories and almanacs, and books for children, particularly textbooks. The ease with which paper can be printed and the rate which could be charged for advertising space on the covers probably accounts for the persistence of paper as a binding for directories. Some were printed to please as well as inform; one example is Rowsell's 1850 Toronto directory covered in green paper printed with various decorative flourishes including a pair of well muscled cupids and a satyr's head with vines trailing from the mouth.³¹

As a textbook binding, paper was likely retained for reasons of economy. Spines of cloth and leather were added for durability and the title page was often reproduced in the usual frame of typographical ornaments. Two children's books printed in Berlin in 1847 and 1867 are particularly interesting examples of this style. The earlier, a German ABC book, is covered in blue-green paper, printed on the front cover with the alphabet and a scene of a man reading in his library, and on the back cover with numbers and a woman feeding a child in a domestic setting.³² The 1867 book of German language Sunday School songs was bound in buff paper and illustrated on the front with a cherub playing Pan

³⁰ Upper Canada. House of Assembly. *Journal*. 1837 (Toronto: Patriot Office, 1837) TRB.

³¹ Rowsell's *City of Toronto & County of York Directory for 1850-1* TMCL.

³² Benjamin Eby, *ABC; Buch Stabir und Lesebuch* (Berlin: Heinrich Eby, 1847) WHS.

pipes in a landscape and on the back with a bird.³³

These charming little books form an interesting comparison with American bindings of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Examples in the New York Public Library studied by Charles M. Adams show that illustrated bindings were most often used for almanacs and children's books.³⁴ Woodcuts were a favourite medium and many of these bindings originated in the Pennsylvania Dutch areas of the United States. The earliest example in the New York collection is very similar to our Berlin bindings; it is a German ABC book published in Philadelphia in 1782 decorated with a woodcut portrait of Luther on the front cover and a cock on the back.

A different type of binding paper very popular in Ontario was the multi-coloured waxed or glazed paper known as marble or fancy which is usually combined with leather in the bindings called half or quarter calf, morocco or whatever leather was chosen. Marble and fancy papers were used for bookbinding in Ontario throughout the pre-Confederation period and were considered suitable for books of many kinds: devotional literature, textbooks, history, travel and science and especially the numerous legal and government publications. Two of our earliest ticketed bindings in half calf and marble paper are *Journals* of the House of Assembly for 1830³⁵ and 1831.³⁶ That of 1830 printed by William Lyon Mackenzie, signed "W. Berczy" and bound by Stanton is an example of the harmony achieved in a careful combination of leather and marble paper. The spine and corners of smooth tan calf are enhanced by paper marbled in the French manner with taupe over veins of blue, amber and ivory.³⁷ Often the leather on a half or quarter bound book was finished with blind or gold tooling for a richer decorative effect.

Many different papers were used in Ontario but general trends can be discerned in the examples already observed. The simplest styles of marbling were usual in the early years of bookbinding; the complex patterns were introduced later. Spotted, Italian and French or shell patterns are usual in the '20s and '30s; Stormont with its finely webbed spots appeared somewhat later. The heavily striped Spanish marbling has seldom been seen on an imprint prior to the mid 1840s and comb or non-pareil marbling appears to have gained popularity after 1850.

Although marble paper of various styles is by far the most common patterned paper used for bookbinding other decorated papers are found as well. For example Hannah Dustin French, writing about American bookbinding notes the

³³ D.W. Bidel, *Das Singvögelein oder Melodien und Lieder für Sonntags – Schulen* (Berlin: Boedeker and Stuebing, 1867) KPL.

³⁴ Charles M. Adams, "Illustrated Publishers' Bindings," *Bulletin of the New York Public Library*, 41 (August, 1937), pp. 607-611.

³⁵ Upper Canada. House of Assembly. *Journal*. 1830 TRB.

³⁶ Upper Canada. House of Assembly. *Journal*. 1831 TRB.

³⁷ The terms used to describe marble paper patterns are from C.W. Woolnough, *The Whole Art of Marbling* (2nd ed.; London: Bell, 1881).

use of bandbox papers.³⁸ One Ontario binding is worth mentioning in this context. It is a Methodist discipline of 1835 in Ojibway and English, covered in tan paper printed with hexagons of rose, blue and teal, overspotted in fine white dots to form stars and circles in outline on some of the tiles.³⁹ It is interesting to speculate whether the decoration was of symbolic as well as aesthetic inspiration.

The advertisements culled from directories have indicated that marble paper was imported and sold to Ontario bookbinders, but there is also evidence that marbling was undertaken in local bookbindingeries. As shown earlier, colours and other ingredients were available while a number of books with edges marbled to match their boards are proof of individual marbling. Two very early examples of books bound with marbled waste paper also indicate local production in a stringent pioneer economy.⁴⁰

Books bound in cloth covered boards form the second major stylistic group. Cloth as a binding material came into wide use in the nineteenth century and the acceptance of fabric by Ontario binders follows technical advances and stylistic change in Great Britain, and to a lesser extent, the United States. Early experiments with cloth were prompted by the search for a covering more economical than leather and more durable than paper. Calico, muslin, linen and canvas were tried but these fabrics were stained by glue and appeared too thick, too thin or too drab. In the mid 1820s a proper book cloth was developed in England. It was dyed, sized and impervious to glue. To disguise its drab texture presses were developed to grain the cloth in decorative patterns and a handsome morocco cloth was in use early in the 1830s.⁴¹ Many other patterns were devised during the next few decades, initially to make cloth look like leather, then allowing cloth to be cloth, until finally, the public accepted cloth bound books so completely that leather bindings were decorated in the style of cloth.

The experimental use of cloth in Ontario bindings is evident in several examples, including dark brown cotton on an 1831 Chippeway Matthew⁴² and a Kingston New Testament of 1833 in battered linen (?) on wooden boards.⁴³ These simple fabrics were also combined with other materials, covering the

³⁸Hannah Dustin French, "Early American Bookbinding by Hand," in *Bookbinding in America*, ed. by Hellmut Lehmann-Haupt (New York: R.R. Bowker, 1967) p. 52.

³⁹Wesleyan Methodist Church in Canada, *Part of the Discipline of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Canada* (Toronto: J.H. Lawrence, 1835) TRB.

⁴⁰[Robert Fleming Gourlay] *To the Resident Land Owners of Upper Canada* [Kingston: 1818] TMCL; *Statutes of Upper Canada*, 1821-24 TRB.

⁴¹The terms used to describe grained cloth patterns are from Michael Sadleir, *XIX Century Fiction* (2 vols.; Cambridge: Constable, 1951) with additions from John Carter, *Binding Variants in English Publishing, 1820-1900* (London: Constable, 1932) and Martha Hartzog, "Nineteenth Century Cloth Bindings," *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, 61 (1967), pp. 114-119.

⁴²Bible. New Testament. Matthew. *Mesah oowh menwahjemowin, kahlenahjemood owh St. Matthew* (York: James Baxter, 1831) TMCL.

⁴³Bible. New Testament. *The New Testament of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ* (Kingston: J. Macfarlane, 1833) TRB.

boards of half or quarter calf books or forming spines on paper boarded volumes like one 1829 Kingston imprint preserved in mint condition.⁴⁴

The earliest use of specially grained book cloth found thus far on an Ontario publication is a binding of diaper cloth on an 1836 Toronto imprint.⁴⁵ According to Joseph Rogers this pattern appeared in England in 1833 and in the United States in 1835.⁴⁶ The binders working in Upper Canada were quick to adopt the new material; three 1837 imprints show a wide range of grains and colours. One, a memorial volume, has been examined in three copies, all in violet cloth, but one finished in a fine morocco grain, the second in moiré and the third in fine ungrained cloth.⁴⁷ Three copies of the Toronto directory of 1837 all stamped "R. Brewer Binder" have also been checked.⁴⁸ The first is bound with violet diaper grain, the second in sand-coloured honeycomb cloth and the third in blue morocco overstriped with finely ribbed vertical ripples. A New Testament printed by Mackenzie in 1837 was bound with a spine of dark brown cloth grained in a ropey cross grain morocco pattern.⁴⁹

The introduction of new patterns and colours and the extensive use of cloth continued on through the period covered by this study and beyond, conforming quite closely to developments in Great Britain and the United States. This is not surprising since most of the book cloth used in both Canada and the United States during the nineteenth century was imported from the major textile mills of Britain. The various morocco patterns were popular in Ontario throughout the pre-Confederation period, as were the ripple and rib grain cloths. Beaded patterns were also common following introduction in the late '50s. Wave, dot and line, honeycomb, net and weave grained cloths occur less frequently on the bindings studied thus far. The mid 1840s saw a flowering of fanciful cloths similar to the popularity of ribbon embosser's cloth in the late '30s in Britain and the United States. Three bindings of Toronto imprints dated 1843, one a book of verse,⁵⁰ the others copies of the proceedings at the founding of King's (now University) College,⁵¹ were covered with elegant floral cloths embossed in designs reminiscent of fine damasks and crewel embroidery.

⁴⁴ [David Chisholme] *The Lower-Canada Watchman* (Kingston: 1829) Courtesy H. Anson-Cartwright.

⁴⁵ Henry Taylor, *An Attempt to Form a System of the Creation of Our Globe* (Toronto: W.J. Coates, 1836) TRB.

⁴⁶ Joseph W. Rogers, "The Rise of American Edition Binding," in *Bookbinding in America* ed. by Hellmut Lehmann-Haupt (New York: R.R. Bowker, 1967), p. 160.

⁴⁷ *A Memoir of the Late Mr. William Rutten* (Cobourg: R.D. Chatterton, 1837) TMCL.

⁴⁸ *The City of Toronto and the Home District Commercial Directory* (Toronto: T. Dalton & W. J. Coates, 1837) TRB.

⁴⁹ Bible. New Testament. *The Productions of the Evangelists and Apostles* (Toronto: William Lyon Mackenzie, 1837) TRB.

⁵⁰ James K. Liston, *Niagara Falls* (Toronto: J.H. Lawrence, 1843) Courtesy J.G. Sherlock.

⁵¹ University of King's College, Toronto, Upper Canada. *Proceedings at the Ceremony of Laying the Foundation Stone, April 23, 1842* (Toronto: H. & W. Rowsell, 1843) TMCL, TRB.

The colours of the cloth chosen by Ontario binders are varied but not as exotic as those described by John Carter and Michael Sadleir, though that may be the fault of this recorder. A strange violet-fading-to-beige or beige-turning-violet is all too common, but other colours are also found: reds, rose, plum, blues and greens of various shades including sage and teal, sand and putty tones, dark brown, navy and black. Some of these rather sombre colours were enlivened with decorative labels and gold stamped patterns and vignettes. This aspect of binding will be discussed later in a section on finishing.

Grained cloths were sometimes combined with other bookbinding materials to form spines for paper covered boards, or to cover the boards of half and quarter bound books. This latter combination of cloth and leather became popular in the 1850s and, as a sturdy and economical binding, was considered appropriate for books of a serious nature, especially legal publications. Ribbed, morocco, bead, dot and line, and ripple grained cloths were all used with morocco and, less frequently, calf.

Books bound in full leather, the third stylistic group in this study, are traditionally the finest example of the bookbinder's art. Leather or part leather bindings had long been standard in Europe and America for books of any consequence and Ontario binders followed this tradition until cloth bindings came into common use. In the 1820s and '30s leather was fitted to books of various types including literary works, almanacs and textbooks. After book cloth proved to be an economical and durable substitute, full leather bindings were in most cases reserved for books of a religious nature, Bibles, prayer and hymn books and church histories, and also for legal and government publications. Leather was used as well to enhance memorial volumes and special copies for dedication and presentation.

Not all of the leathers advertised by Ontario bookbinders can be identified on their bindings today. The artificially grained skins are particularly difficult to distinguish after more than a hundred and ten years. Examples have been seen thus far of sheep, roan, morocco in various finishes, smooth, hard, straight and cross grained, and calf, sprinkled, mottled, diced, smooth and even treed. The tree calf binding is an unexpected finish for an Ontario shop in 1845 but very effective with a spreading design on smooth tan calf boards.⁵² The telltale drops of dye on the text which please a student of binding technique, no doubt vexed the binder, possibly Richard Brewer, who published this book and as a binder has more ticketed bindings to his credit than any of his colleagues.

The calf and sheep used by Ontario binders was usually brown or tan, occasionally stained to a reddish hue. Morocco and grained leathers were chosen in deep reds, blues, moss and emerald greens, aubergine, navy and black.

Douglas Cockerell, a binder and historian of binding once said that "the leather on a well bound book should look as if it had grown there."⁵³ Not all our pioneer binders worked at that level of competence but they did produce

⁵² Francis Walkingame, *The Tutor's Assistant* (Toronto: R. Brewer, 1845) TRB.

⁵³ Douglas Cockerell, *Some Notes on Bookbinding* (London: Oxford University Press, 1929), p. 83.

attractive and interesting bindings in the leathers available to them. As an example, a bilingual English-Mohawk *Book of Common Prayer*, printed in Hamilton in 1842, has been examined in three different leather bindings which illustrate the range of styles found in Ontario as well as some of the problems encountered in a study of these bindings.

The simplest binding is typical of many others. It is of tan calf over paper boards with the spine divided into five compartments by single gold fillets. The short title is stamped letter by letter in gold in the second compartment.⁵⁴ Another copy was bound in moss green grained leather but this binding is now incomplete since it has been repaired and rebaked.⁵⁵ The third copy is a splendid binding of red cross grain morocco, tooled in gold on front and back covers, on board edges and turnovers as well as on the spine.⁵⁶ This lavish decoration was no doubt undertaken for John Hill whose name appears stamped in gold on the front cover and is repeated on a leather label glued to the outer front endpaper. Abraham Nelles, the editor, acknowledges in his preface the considerable assistance of John Hill Junr, a Mohawk catechist from the Bay of Quinte Mohawk settlement, in the preparation and translation of the work. The question of whether or not this elegant binding is from the shop of an Ontario binder must remain unanswered for the present. The use of a small six pointed star in the tooling may be a clue since Hannah Dustin French identified it as characteristic of Scottish work in her study of Scottish-American bindings.⁵⁷

Tools used in the decoration of bindings presumed to be those of Ontario craftsmen will be described later, but at this point, it is appropriate to say that no binding examined so far can be attributed to any binder by means of tools. None of the hand stamped tools have been found on more than one binding and the fillets or rolls common to several are those common enough to be found in the stock of any binder. The scarcity of ticketed leather bindings is a serious liability in an examination of this style. Only one such binding has been found and it is a standard law book binding bound for presentation by Brown Brothers in 1856.⁵⁸ Examples of ticketed bindings do include one quarter leather⁵⁹ and three half leather bindings.⁶⁰ Of these two are undecorated; the others bear the impression of tools which could be associated with individual binders if seen on other bindings.

A very distinctive style of binding in full leather was typical of the Berlin area in the late 1830s and early 1840s. Its roots, like that of many settlers of

⁵⁴ Church of England. *The Book of Common Prayer* (Hamilton: Ruthven's, 1842) TRB.

⁵⁵ HPL.

⁵⁶ TRB.

⁵⁷ Hannah Dustin French, "Scottish-American Bookbindings," *The Book Collector*, 6 (Summer, 1957), p. 156.

⁵⁸ Joshua Rordans, *The Upper Canada Law Directory for 1857* (Toronto: Henry Rowsell, 1856) TRB.

⁵⁹ John Roaf, *Lectures on the Millenium* (Toronto: 1844) TRB.

⁶⁰ Upper Canada. House of Assembly. *Journals*. 1830, 1831, 1837 TRB.

Waterloo County, can be traced back to the Deutsch of Pennsylvania and to Germany. Several historians of American bookbinding have commented on the medieval character of bindings crafted by the Plain People of Ephrata and other communities in the United States.⁶¹ The German prayer and hymn books and catechisms published by Ontario Mennonites were bound in the same style though somewhat more crudely. The coverings of brown calf were fitted over very heavy paper boards, or more frequently, wooden boards bevelled along the inside of the foredge and sometimes along the top and bottom of the boards as well. The customary finish was a leather strap nailed to the lower cover through a slit in the leather. The strap was tipped with a simple clasp of brass or white metal, sometimes gilded, and shaped like a triangle with the base cut in a decorative shape over the strap. A bar catch was attached to the upper cover, a placement on the boards characteristic of German binding. The volumes are small, with few exceeding fourteen centimetres in height and the wooden boards enclosing a substantial text produce an impression of sturdiness enhanced by the primitive style and finish of the bindings.

Unusual work was produced again at Berlin in 1857 on three copies of the same German hymn book. One is in diced maroon morocco with the covering of the lower board extended up over the foredge and onto the upper board.⁶² This flap ends in a tag shaped like the brass clasps which fits under a leather strap. The other bindings are calf, one smooth,⁶³ the other diced,⁶⁴ both with embossing reminiscent of early panel stamps and both finished with brass clasps. The motif decorating the smooth calf binding is the traditional Pennsylvania Dutch tulip.

Thus far Ontario bindings have been discussed in terms of the materials chosen to cover boards and form spines. This selection is part of the process of bookbinding known as forwarding, usually defined as the steps taken from the receipt of a sewn book to completion of the covering process. The forwarding or construction of Ontario bindings examined for this study shows a general lack of finesse. Some are neat and firm, of course, but many of the bindings reveal careless or unskilled workmanship in crooked endpapers, badly turned corners on cloth and leather bindings, inadequate paring of leather joints and frequent dependence on expedient methods. This should not be attributed solely to a lack of skill on the part of the binders. Economic factors no doubt played a part in lowering standards, as did the inevitable isolation of provincial craftsmen and a probable dearth of patrons able to judge and willing to pay for fine bindings. Ontario binders were not the only ones faced with these challenges to traditional craftsmanship. The nineteenth century was not a proud century in the history of

⁶¹ Hazel Dreis, "Lancaster, Pennsylvania, Bookbindings," *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, 42 (1948), pp. 119-128; French, "Early American Bookbinding By Hand," p. 26; Lawrence C. Wroth, *The Colonial Printer* (Charlottesville, Va: Dominion Books, 1931), p. 211.

⁶² *Die Gemeinschaftliche Liedersammlung* (Berlin: Boedeker u. Stuebing, 1857) WHS.

⁶³ Courtesy G. Andrus.

⁶⁴ WHS.

bookbinding in any country although some of the early work with cloth is interesting and the end of the century was distinguished by a revival of fine binding.

The most important steps in the construction of a binding are forming the back and attaching the boards. Here Ontario binders tended to follow the popular and regrettable practice of producing a flat back by sawing through the back of the book to sink the cords, which were then laced through the boards, or more often, frayed out under the endpapers. On some early bindings the cords were left quite long and form patterns like birds' feet under thin endpapers. A variation in this mode of construction was the use of woven tape rather than cord, drawn onto the outer surface of the boards. A few early bindings were put together with tape; after 1840 this somewhat clumsy style was used mainly in binding textbooks. The popularity of cloth for binding and the gradual mechanization of the trade after the 1830s led to the practice of casing where the cover is made separately and attached to the book by pasting along a gauze or mull hinge and over the endpapers.

Raised bands actually corresponding to cords used in the construction of a book's spine were not a feature of Ontario bookbinding but as a convention they persisted in the decoration of spines in leather and cloth. Some leather bound books feature fake bands raised with bits of cardboard to emulate traditional spines. Law books and government publications bound in the '50s and '60s were often given this extra finish. The practice of arbitrarily dividing flat spines of leather or cloth into compartments also echoes the craft tradition of earlier styles of binding when raised cords were genuine and common.

The headband is another feature of fine binding, used in Ontario more as an element of decoration than of construction. Properly worked headbands of cotton, linen or silk are rare, but many Ontario binders observed the convention and afforded the spines of their bindings some slight protection by adding a fold of cloth or paper where back and spine meet. Marble paper was used and also book cloth, but the most common headband was formed of a fold of stiffened fabric striped in blue, red or tan with white. In the best examples the binder turned the cloth over a cord.

An interesting aspect of studying the construction of bindings is the opportunity to observe the small economies traditional among bookbinders. Some of the earliest incunabula have been found during the repair of bindings of the period. Equivalent treasures may be concealed in Ontario bindings; certainly some interesting glimpses can be had through endpapers and under the spines of damaged bindings. Hollow spines are usually lined for firmness and Ontario binders used a wide variety of waste paper for linings as well as for hinges and padding: marble paper, advertisements, legal forms and documents, illustrated broadsides, and in one instance, an entire cheque to be drawn on the Bank of British America.⁶⁵ One of the Berlin bindings now stripped of leather, has retained the arithmetic lesson of Aaron Eby, applied upside-down as a lining,

⁶⁵ Robert McVicar, *Letters on Emigration* (Hamilton: S. Hewson, 1853) TRB.

recording for future generations his struggles with vulgar, proper and improper fractions, multiplication, division and the handling of shillings and pence.⁶⁶

Two early marble paper bindings mentioned in discussion of that material are relevant here as interesting examples of economy. Both books, one being Robert Fleming Gourlay's call for reform dated 1818,⁶⁷ the other a compilation of laws covering the years 1821 to 1824,⁶⁸ are bound in half calf and paper marbled over a printed text. In the case of the Gourlay, a Scottish almanac or directory dated about 1815 was used as a base for the decoration and a Greek and Latin text was marbled to provide paper for the statutes owned and inscribed "Geo Keefer, Esq., Thorold, 1826."

The forwarding process also includes the insertion of endpapers and any finish applied to book edges. There are interesting examples of both on Ontario bindings. The most common finish for edges was sprinkling usually in blue or tan, sometimes in maroon. Two colours were occasionally combined or applied in a resist design. Another way of finishing book edges was with a coloured stain. The Berlin binders of the 1830s and '40s favoured red and yellow for this decoration. Deeper colours, carefully burnished were used when coloured edges became popular in trade bindings twenty years later. This period of the '50s and '60s was one of increased interest in book edge decoration with marbling and gilding attempted more frequently than ever before.

The decorative potential of endpapers was often overlooked by Ontario binders who pasted a sheet of plain thin paper on the inside of their front and back covers. A few binders, however, used marble paper throughout the period of this study and heavier paper in plain colours was introduced gradually in the early 1840s, for decorative reasons no doubt, but possibly also to provide a firmer base for gluing cased bindings. The earliest use noted so far is of pale yellow paper on two copies of an 1843 imprint.⁶⁹ Butter yellow followed in 1846,⁷⁰ and deepened to sulphur in 1853.⁷¹ Pink was added to the palette about the same time and sage, pale blue, tan, orange and robin's egg blue appeared towards the end of the decade. The colours deepened in the '60s and by Confederation maroon, dark brown and deep teal endpapers were fashionable in Ontario bindings.

The other branch of bookbinding, companion to forwarding, is finishing, the work done on a binding after the book is covered. This is normally the application of any decoration and the identification of the contents of the binding. Some Ontario bindings were not finished; nothing was added after the covering. Others were finished with a brief identification of the contents or were decorated in addition to lettering or labelling.

⁶⁶ *Die Gemeinschaftliche Liedersammlung* (Berlin: Heinrich Eby, 1841) WHS.

⁶⁷ [Gourlay] *To the Resident Land Owners of Upper Canada* TMCL.

⁶⁸ *Statutes of Upper Canada*, 1821-24 TRB.

⁶⁹ University of King's College, Toronto, Upper Canada. *Proceedings* TMCL, TRB.

⁷⁰ John Breakenridge, *The Crusades* (Kingston: John Rowlands, 1846) TRB.

⁷¹ Alexander Walker, *The Knapsack* (Kingston: James M. Creighton, 1853) TRB.

The simplest form of finishing, that is, an indication of the contents of a book by a statement of title usually accompanied by the name of the author and sometimes also by publisher and price, was handled in various ways by Ontario binders. Leather and cloth were often lettered directly on the spine or front cover. The technique of gold tooling on leather was already well established and little variation is seen on Ontario bindings although some hands and eyes were steadier than others. Stamping on cloth was new, however, and letter by letter gold tooling seen on the first books bound in cloth was gradually supplanted by the mechanical stamping of arming and blocking presses.

Labels are another way of identifying the book inside a binding and those used by Ontario binders range from starkly utilitarian to richly decorative. Labels printed on paper, which according to Michael Sadleir had had their day as a style in Great Britain by 1840,⁷² persisted on through the '50s and '60s in what was then Canada West. The typical spine label, usually supplied by the printer, was cream paper lettered in black or red and edged with a double rule, thick and thin. The text including author, title, and sometimes price was usually printed horizontally but vertical examples are also seen. Paper labels printed for application to the front covers of Ontario bindings were larger and often more decorative. For example a drill book for volunteer militiamen was bound in cherry red cloth and finished with a label printed in gold on glossy black paper.⁷³ Other instances of successful design include a green label edged with shading to resemble a picture frame,⁷⁴ a label of bright orange paper elaborate type faces,⁷⁵ and another in blue with columns flanking and flowers crowning the text, itself composed of three different types.⁷⁶ The best of these front-cover labels have been seen so far on imprints dated in the decade after 1845. Paper labels have been found on a variety of bindings: cloth, paper, paper boards with a cloth spine, quarter leather and cloth and quarter leather and paper, plain and marbled.

Labels made of leather were also used to identify and decorate Ontario bindings. A leather label for the spine, known as a lettering piece, was generally cut from a fine glossy skin dyed red or black. The spine was usually divided into even compartments with the second and perhaps the fourth reserved for the lettering piece. Most of the Ontario examples finished in this precise style are legal bindings with a few religious and official titles as well. The bindings seen so far are of quarter, half and full leather. Leather labels intended for the front covers of Ontario bindings are met less frequently and appear much less rigidly governed by stylistic convention. Several are disproportionately large and clumsily tooled but the bindings they decorate are among the most attractive

⁷² Michael Sadleir, *The Evolution of Publishers' Binding Styles, 1770-1900* (London: Constable, 1930), p. 50.

⁷³ *Instructions for Drill* (Toronto: Derbshire & Desbarats, 1856) TRB.

⁷⁴ J.P. Clarke, ed., *Canadian Church Psalmody* (Toronto: H. & W. Rowsell, 1845) TRB.

⁷⁵ McVicar, *Letters on Emigration* HPL, TRB.

⁷⁶ Henry Taylor, *On the Present Condition of United Canada* (London: William Sutherland, 1849) TRB.

found in this study. All examples seen so far are gold tooled either with decorative rolls or foliate corners enclosing the book title or the owner's name. Leather labels in this style were usually applied to bindings of half or quarter leather and marble paper. An exception is a book printed for private distribution and ticketed by the binder. Four copies have been examined so far, all in full cloth with a tooled leather label on the front cover.⁷⁷ These leather labels, serving to enhance as well as inform are a good introduction to the decoration of leather bindings by craftsmen in Upper Canada and Canada West.

Leather is hand decorated by bookbinders using metal tools of various types and sizes. The individual hand tool is used to stamp a single impression of any shape normally no larger than three quarters of an inch square. Fillets or rolls are the other tools in the bookbinder's arsenal. These are engraved wheels which impress a running design of lines or decoration.

From the bindings examined thus far twenty-seven hand tools have been recorded. Most were impressed in the unlettered compartments of a spine usually in gilt, occasionally in blind. Many of these tools are leaf or floral motifs loosely arranged in a square or lozenge shape. Others are single flowers or leaves of a decoratively abstract type or smaller tools like dots, circles, stars, or flower heads. Several roughly triangular corner tools, both right and left handed, can also be added to an inventory of Ontario tools. Fillets and rolls are more numerous than hand tools, with more than thirty-five examples identified to date. They were used to divide or outline compartments of a spine, to edge the leather where it meets the cloth or paper on a half or quarter bound book, to frame or border covers and panels, to decorate board edges and turnovers and, as mentioned earlier, to outline labels or lettering on a cover. Some of the rolls are traditional designs like dot, dash, Greek key, daisy and chain, loop and diamond, and chains, waves and scallops of various sizes. Others are more distinctive and elaborate floral and vine patterns. Some rolled designs have been noted on more than one binding, but in most cases these are the rolls common enough to be found in every binder's stock. The tooling of many Ontario bindings was so simple that the impression of the rolls is often not sufficiently prolonged to allow a close examination of exact details or idiosyncrasies of the individual tool.

The decoration of leather bindings followed long established craft traditions but binders wishing to adorn cloth were dependent on technical advances and stylistic developments taking place in other countries, chiefly Great Britain. By 1832 English binders were using presses to block lettering and decoration in gilt directly on cloth bindings. Manufacture of similar presses began in 1838 in the United States. The earliest Ontario example of decorative blocking on cloth recorded so far is the floral frame blind stamped on at least two copies of an 1839 imprint.⁷⁸ The first decorative gold stamping encountered in this study is found on an 1843 poetry book where a laurel wreath was impressed very deeply

⁷⁷ Henry Ruttan, *Lectures on the Ventilation of Buildings* (Cobourg: The Star & Gazette Office, 1848) TRB, TMCL, Courtesy J.G. Sherlock.

⁷⁸ John Harris, *Mammon* (Toronto: John Ryerson, 1839) TRB, Courtesy J.G. Sherlock.

on the front cover.⁷⁹ Examples of blocking and stamping on cloth can be found with increasing frequency throughout the rest of the period under study. Much of the decoration was banal; the border of blind stamped lines with corner foliage and a central lozenge became a *cliché* of nineteenth century cloth binding. Fortunately some trade bindings were of a higher standard. The binding of Kirby's *The U.E.* already described in these pages is one example.⁸⁰ The design chosen was conventional but the vigour of individual elements and the choice of rosy-red cloth, straight grain morocco on one copy seen⁸¹ and bead grain on another,⁸² combine to make a binding worthy of the signature "Bound by Brown Bros" stamped on the endpaper of the morocco grain copy.

Some of the pictorial stamps used in the decoration of cloth bindings are very fine. Ornaments, scenes, crests and emblems appropriate to the content of the binding were specially cut to adorn sophisticated trade bindings. One example is the morocco cloth binding of a book of hymns published in Toronto in 1865.⁸³ A Greek religious motif was embossed in gold on the front cover, a sundial and a Latin inscription on the back. This binding finished with gold lettering and crosses on the spine and edges deeply stained and burnished is a typical example of nineteenth century trade binding.

It is a long journey from this mass-produced elegance back to the primitive coverings of pioneer Upper Canada but the distance was travelled in less than fifty years. The records of the trip presented here are preliminary. With major collections still beckoning, any generalizations and conclusions expressed thus far serve as a framework and a focus for future research.

PATRICIA LOCKHART FLEMING

⁷⁹ *Reminiscences of a Soldier* (Toronto: Rogers, Thompson & Co., 1843) TRB.

⁸⁰ David Sinclair, "William Kirby and the Production of *The U.E.*," *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of Canada*, 9 (1970), pp. 30-35.

⁸¹ William Kirby, *The U.E.* (Niagara: 1859) TRB.

⁸² KPL.

⁸³ [Benjamin Homer Dixon] *Golden Moments* (Toronto: Chewett & Co., 1865) TMCL.