Sidney E. Berger. *Edward Seymour & The Fancy Paper Company*. New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll Press, 2006. 80 pp.; US \$150 ISBN 1-58456-189-0

Another addition to the Oak Knoll Press list of publications about the crafts attendant to book production, this is a lovely package of information about a once-popular paper marbler who fell into obscurity when his company went out of business in 1971. The text is letterpress-printed and includes many illustrations: photographs of Seymour's shop and process, his correspondence, and tipped-in examples of twenty of his bench-marbled papers. Quarter bound in leather, housed in a matching slipcase and designed classically with generous margins, the book is nicely produced, but on opening the cover I found a page listing twelve errata which seemed excessive for eighty small pages of text and illustrations. The list is preceded by the typographer's comment that errors are "incidental to the hand process." Perhaps so, but in reading I found several additional typos not listed in the errata, which seemed downright sloppy in a limited-edition book about a perfectionist artisan. In my experience, there is an aspiration to perfection among letterpress printers and handbinders which would preclude printing an edition without proper proof-reading, never mind binding and releasing it. Perhaps the placement of Kim Merker's statement and the errata at the front is intended as the publisher's disclaimer in an otherwise well designed and executed book.

Sidney E. Berger came to research and write about Edward Seymour through collecting decorated papers. Having purchased numerous distinctive examples of similar papers over time, he finally discovered the name of the man who had produced them in an article written by a William Seymour for *Matrix, the Review for Printers and Bibliophiles* in which the Fancy Paper Company and its proprietor were discussed. With a name, Berger was able to begin his search for further information about the man and his company. By writing to every William Seymour in England, he found Seymour's nephew, who had in his possession the archives of the Fancy Paper Company. After much correspondence, Berger went to Scotland to visit Bill Seymour and was able to peruse the company records, which were extensive, if incomplete. He went through financial records, correspondence, invoices, examples of decorated papers along with descriptions of how they were made, photographs of the shop and the process, and schematic diagrams for the bench marbling machine

Seymour invented and had built in the mid-1920s and used until the company's demise. Ronnie Gousman, a bookbinder, provided the records of his acquisition of the remaining stock of decorated papers made by the Fancy Paper Company as well as the samples tipped into the book. The biographical sketch written by William Seymour, who, in his youth, had worked with his uncle, is a warm tribute to the man behind the papers, providing a sense of his skill and patient devotion to his craft.

The text is divided into six chapters that are as much about Berger's quest for information as about Seymour's life and work. Much of the chapter entitled "The Fancy Paper Company, and Edward Seymour the Businessman" is devoted to discussing the distribution of shares and other business details which reveal little about the company's actual production and influence. It seems Seymour was a brilliant marbler, but a less-than-brilliant businessman who conscientiously tried to respond to his clients' requests, however unrealistic. Although Seymour's singular ability to match colours and patterns, even from papers he had not made, is mentioned repeatedly, there are no examples of these papers in photos or samples.

The swatches are delicately speckled machine-made bench papers in various pattern sizes and colour combinations, some bold and crisp, others delicate with soft edges. Although the pieces are tipped in with no accompanying information, the variety demonstrates Seymour's colour sense and skill in controlling the machine he invented. Over thirty years after the company's closure it is remarkable that these examples of Seymour's paper still exist in a quantity sufficient to be included in the edition of three-hundred copies. It is, however, disappointing that the unique ability which brought his work to be so much in demand is not represented beyond a reproduced type-written formula sheet and one hand-written notation listing the colours needed to reproduce a pattern. The photographs of his trough-and-bench marbling techniques are quite informative and additional images of his work might have been more revealing than the photographs of business correspondence.

Sidney E. Berger has succeeded in giving the story of Edward Seymour and the Fancy Paper Company "a more extensive treatment" than it had previously received. One wonders how far the information will travel in this edition of 300 copies.

TARA BRYAN

Walking Bird Press, Flatrock, Newfoundland