



# Dingbats

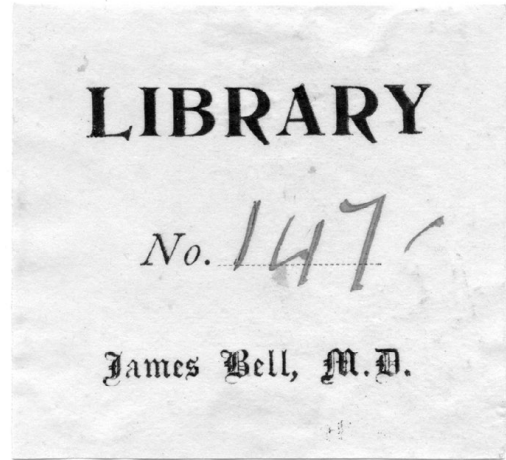
ORNAMENTS &

*fanciful initials*



A regular feature of  
**The Devil's Artisan**  
<http://devilsartisan.ca>

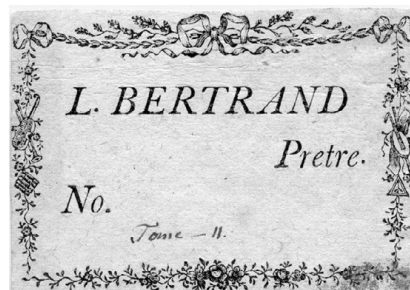
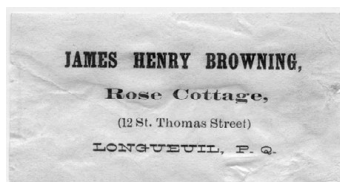
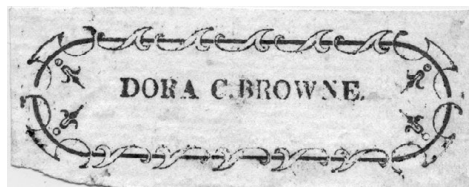
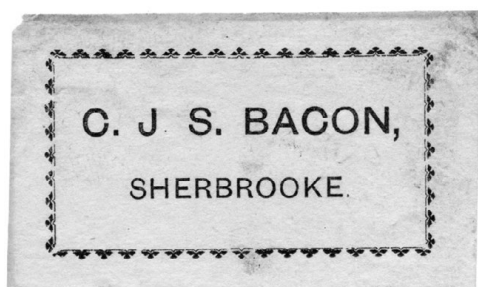
## *Tracking Plates*



ONE OF THE PECULIAR facts of cataloguing the Thomas Murray Bookplate Collection (housed at the UBC Library) derives from Murray's own organizational system. The bookplates are grouped into binders by general type—heraldic crests, large images and simple text, to name a few. The binder of bookplates currently being cataloged is one of those comprised almost entirely of textual bookplates, most of which provide only an individual's name, with perhaps a city. This is where the research comes in, leading to a huge array of outcomes.

With only a name to go on, it isn't uncommon to find nothing about the owner. A common name can be hidden in tens or hundreds of other similar names in a census record. In some cases, a person may have moved to Canada and died within the 10-year interval between census takings, or the bookplate may not originally have come from Canada. Murray collected bookplates from many other countries, particularly England and the U.S. The bookplate of Dora Browne is one of these, and is notable for being printed with a metallic ink.

When a bookplate contains a city, the chances of identifying the person go up dramatically. City directories enable name searches between the census years. The bookplate of C.J.S. Bacon, which lists his city as Sherbrooke, enabled the identification among all the possible C. Bacons



in the census records. (While the middle initials also proved helpful, these are recorded irregularly in the census records.) A directory will also provide the person's profession and address, making it possible to narrow down the age of the bookplate to the years during which they lived at that particular address.

A name and address can be enough to provide an entry into the wealth of genealogical resources and census data available, so the researcher develops a picture, piece by piece, of the bookplate's owner. Researching the bookplate of James Henry Browning became a trip through parish records, census records and city directories that culminated in a four-generation family tree, tracing the Browning family after the parents emigrated to Canada.

Census records tracked the births and deaths of children and spouses, while parish records provided the names and dates for births, christenings and marriages. The central figure of this research, however, remained somewhat clouded. A 1918 christening record confirmed the existence of a wife and son, George. However, the wife's name remained a mystery until the recent release of the 1921 Canadian census, which revealed her name as Minnie, and that she and James had at least four children.

Sometimes a name comes with other useful information, like a title or honorific. In the case of the bookplate of James Bell, MD, the medical degree and the general eastern Canada focus of the Thomas Murray Collection allowed

an attribution of probable ownership to Dr. James Bell, a prominent Montreal surgeon.

One particular bookplate remains something of a mystery: that of L. Bertrand, Prêtre. The language and title reveal that the bookplate likely belonged to a French or Québécois priest. Research revealed two possible candidates—Laurent-Joseph Bertrand, a priest from Montreal who died in 1813, or Louis Bertrand Castel, a French mathematician and monk who died in 1757. This second possibility is particularly intriguing, as Castel's most famous work was a treatise on the melody of colours and he built an instrument that lit stained-glass windows as keys were struck. Notably, the border of the bookplate contains musical instruments and a triangle that appears to represent a prism.

Knowing exactly who owned a bookplate is often difficult to definitively discover, but research can often reveal a probable candidate or two, or at the very least some intriguing possibilities.

.....  
 ~ Caroline Crowell is a recent graduate with a dual Master of Library and Information Studies/ Master of Archival Studies degree from the iSchool at the University of British Columbia.

The Rare Books and Special Collections Bookplate Collection can be accessed from the UBC Library Digital Collections and Services site, <http://digitalcollections.library.ubc.ca>.