

The Bits Stuck In

THERE IS A substantial and growing literature devoted to the rapidly evolving art form of the bookplate. With their combination of typography, art and bibliophilic themes, bookplates offer a fascinating look into the history of books. This column will regularly feature a couple of bookplates in each issue, along with the stories behind them. But to start things off, let's define the various bits of bits that get stuck in books.

The bookplate, or *ex libris* (Latin for *from the library of...*), quite simply is a pasted-in mark of ownership that includes the name of the owner and some artwork illustrating something about that owner, such as a coat of arms, hobby, favourite place, and so on. Despite its modest function, the bookplate has attracted the talents of great artists, including Dürer, Holbein, Hogarth, Beardsley and Whistler. Before printed books, owners wrote their names in their books as they do now. But printing allowed for the printed *ex libris* to emerge as a mark of ownership. Different authorities suggest dates as early as 1450 to as late as 1470 when the first *ex libris* appeared. As with the first printed book, the first *ex libris* comes from Germany.

A book label is a smaller version of the bookplate, usually limited to the owner's name or initials and perhaps a decorative border. Typically both bookplates and book labels are located on the front free endpaper or on the inside of the front board.

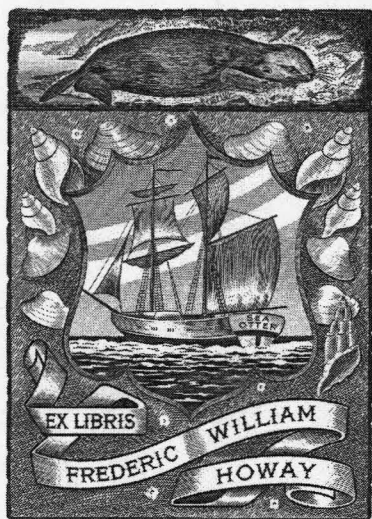
From here on the bits of paper tend to get smaller. For example, the binder's ticket is a small engraved

or printed label identifying the book's binder. This type of paste-in was widely used in Britain between about 1725 and 1825, but its popularity elsewhere lasted longer, especially in places where hand binding persisted, such as India, Portugal, Mexico and South America. Occasionally these marks grew to substantial size and artistic glory, but in England at least they remained small, as did the status of most of their producers. In the past 150 years or so the binder's ticket has been superseded by having the binder's name stamped using a metal or rubber stamp. Usually the stamp appears on the rear board's interior, near the upper or lower edge.

Finally, there is the bookseller's ticket. This is usually a small paper label stuck on the inside of the front board, typically at the bottom. These were often employed by used-book dealers in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, but the practice has largely gone out of fashion. There are also a variety of stock control tickets, but these were used primarily before computers became commonplace.

All of these bits of paper help to establish the provenance—or ownership history—of a given book, and so are they of interest to rare-book librarians and scholars of book history. Collecting bookplates is also a pursuit in its own right, and there are a number of publications dedicated to the subject. If you have an *ex libris* that you'd like to share with *Amphora's* readers, please send a copy to us (see page 2 for address), care of the Bookplate Editor, along with a brief note including details such as the date of production, the artist, the dates and biography of the owner, the method of production, and any other relevant details.

Ralph Stanton is the head of Rare Books and Special Collections at the University of British Columbia Library.



THIS IS A BEAUTIFUL example of a distinctly British Columbian bookplate. Frederic William Howay (1867–1943) was well known for his important British Columbiana book collection and took great interest in B.C. history. He wrote books and pamphlets, many of them concerning the early maritime fur trade of B.C.

This bookplate was created in the first half of the 20th century and reflects Howay's interest in B.C.'s maritime fur-trading history. Sea otter pelts were the basis of the fur trade, and the ship the *Sea Otter* is the first ship listed in Howay's chronology *A List of Trading Vessels in the Maritime Fur Trade, 1785–1794*.

Howay was born in London, Ontario, but moved to British Columbia in his early childhood. In 1887, he went to Halifax to study law at Dalhousie University. He returned to practise law in British Columbia in 1891, and in 1907 he became a judge in New Westminster. Howay's large collection of books and personal papers is held in Rare Books and Special Collections at the University of British Columbia.

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