

A Brief History of Golding & Co.

A short distance from the India Wharf and the elevated expressway in Boston stands an old five-story brick building. A motorist on the expressway (U.S. Interstate 93) might notice a sign painted high on the side of the building, in faded but still quite legible white paint:

GOLDING
& CO.
PRINTING
PRESSES
SEALS

The building on High Street (formerly Fort-Hill Square) is one of two remaining which were part of the factory of Golding & Co. from 1875 to 1906. Three similar buildings have been torn down. During its period of activity, Golding was a major manufacturer of platen job presses and other printing equipment, with a worldwide reputation and distribution. Even today, long after the demise of the company, owners of Golding-manufactured Pearl presses think so highly of them as to have formed an informal owners association.

The man who founded the firm, William Hughson Golding, was born in St. John, New Brunswick, on 24 May 1845. His great-grandfather Stephen Golding, born in New York in 1761, remained a Royalist during the Revolution and was forced to move to New Brunswick, Canada, where he farmed and was a justice of the peace.

Stephen's son Henry, born in 1791, became a grocer. Henry's son Gilbert Merritt Golding—William's father—was born in St. John in 1818,

and became a farmer, innkeeper, shop owner, and contractor. In 1848, three years after William was born, the family returned to the United States, this time settling in Boston.¹

William H. Golding's first known formal education began in Boston at the Brimmer School. When he was twelve the family moved again, this time to suburban Chelsea. Three years later, at an age when a youth of that era was accustomed to think seriously about earning his own living, William Golding went to work for the local newspaper, the *Chelsea Herald*, presumably as an apprentice compositor or pressman. Later he moved from there to a large printing house in Boston. In 1864, advancing rapidly because of his own skill as well as because of the manpower shortage caused by the Civil War, he was established at the age of nineteen as a practical printer and foreman of the plant.

As the war continued, Golding joined an infantry company which later became an artillery unit. But, by the war's end, he had gone no farther from Boston than Fort Clark in New Bedford. After being mustered out, he went to work for the Boston *Daily Courier*, where he remained until 1869. Then, twenty-three years old, and with a small amount of capital saved from his earnings, he decided to go into the business of manufacturing printers' equipment.²

1. Family information in a letter from Barbara Golding Blanchard, granddaughter of William H. Golding, 22 June 1978.

2. Information on Golding's career from obituaries in *The Franklin Sentinel*, Franklin, Mass., 22 August 1916; *Inland Printer* 58 (October 1916), 110; *American Printer* 63 (20 December 1916), 76.

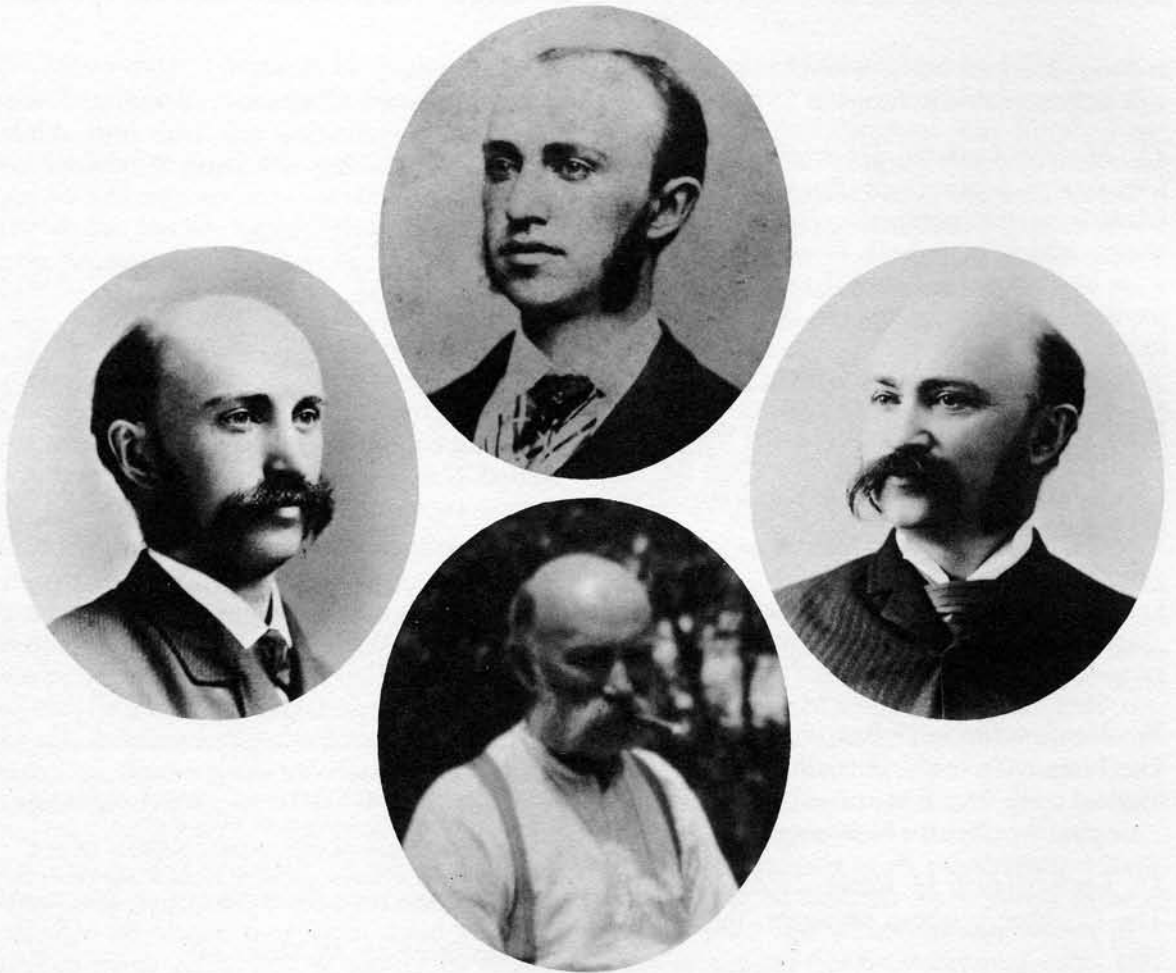


Fig. 1. (Above) Four portrait photographs of William H. Golding: ca. 1870 (age 25); ca. 1885 (age 40); ca. 1895 (age 50) and ca. 1915 (age 70.) (Courtesy Barbara Golding Blanchard.)



Fig. 2. (Below) Employees and management of Golding & Co. assembled in front of the factory for a group photo. Golding is in the center of the front row, impeccably tailored. (Courtesy Barbara Golding Blanchard.)



Fig. 3. Golding & Co. factory buildings as they appear today. The building at the right is at the left of the wood engraved view. Interconnecting doors to the now-demolished buildings can be seen at the rear of the building. (Photo by Stephen O. Saxe.)



Fig. 4. Time and the elements have not yet obliterated this sign advertising Golding & Co.'s "PRINTING PRESSES & SEALS," painted on the side of one of the factory buildings on High Street, Boston. (Photo by Stephen O. Saxe.)



Fig. 5. Trade card of Golding & Co. at their earliest address, 14 Kilby Street. E.H. Dennison is listed as a principal. (Courtesy Rollo Silver.)

In 1869 he went into business as The Printer Manufacturing Co. at 14 Kilby Street, Boston. Golding's partner in the new venture was Edward H. Dennison, ten years his senior. The two men had met at the *Daily Courier*, where Dennison was one of the proprietors. We do not know whether Dennison was part of the original establishment of the company, but we do know that at least as early as 1870 he severed his connection with the newspaper to become Golding's financial partner. He remained a member of the firm until his death in 1903.³

A catalogue of the company at the time lists W. H. Golding as manager on one page and as business manager on another. His first products were small seals, rubber stamps, hand type holders (like bookbinders' pallets), printed and stamped labels, and similar items. The catalogue says, "for those requiring a variety of printing and frequent changes, we have Printing Presses and Outfits from \$20 upwards."

The first press put on the market for amateur use was the Novelty of Benjamin O. Woods, which appeared in Boston in 1867. According to Truman J. Spencer, historian of the amateur journalism movement in the late nineteenth century, "Mr. Woods had no use for a self-inking machine, and predicted that they would never amount to anything, for, he said, 'a good self-inker can not be made for a price within the reach of the average purchaser.' Others thought differently, however, and in the early 1870s Golding & Co., of Boston, brought out the Pearl, the first self-inking amateur press on the market. They later made it into a rotary."⁴

The press that Golding offered, at least as early as 1872, was a Pearl—but a Pearl that none of us today has ever seen. The first Pearl was a hand press. It very closely resembled a model submitted by Golding to the U.S. Patent Office. (The actual patent, no. 145,101, was granted on 2 December 1873.) This proto-Pearl was advertised in *Rowell's Newspaper Directory* for 1872, appeared on the cover of Golding's catalogue for 1874, and was advertised in the following years in *Youth's Companion*. It was eventually supplied with a base,

flywheel, and treadle to become the old-style Pearl still used by amateurs today; and about 1877 the hand press version was discontinued.

To a printer of the period before the 1880s Pearl signified a small type, one size larger than Diamond, or about five points in modern terms. Clearly Golding chose the name to refer to the small size of the press, as well as its claim to beauty. Golding also made a hand-inking, table model press slightly smaller than the Pearl—and it was called the Diamond.

There was a clear demand for hand presses, and several manufacturers were providing them: Kelsey, still producing them after all these years, in Meriden, Connecticut; Daughaday and his Model Press in Philadelphia; Joseph Watson's Centennial and Young America in New York; and Benjamin O. Woods' Novelty Press in Boston, among others. During the boom in amateur printing, Golding's press helped to fill the need for a sturdy, workable, self-inking hand press.

One of those who bought a second-hand Pearl in 1884 was twenty-year-old George T. Dunlap, later to become one of the founders of the great publishing firm of Grosset & Dunlap. He retained his interest in amateur printing throughout his lifetime, and in 1932 he wrote:

When I was a boy I played with printing a lot, having had a succession of presses, the last and best of which was the 6 x 9 Pearl, which had a lever on both sides, connected with a round wooden bar, or handle, which, as I remember it, turned with the hand as it was brought down and forward. The great advantage of this method of power application is that only one position of the hand is needed, the grip, pull and pressure all coming with one movement.⁵

The press with two side levers connected by a round wooden handle that Dunlap described could only be the Pearl hand press. By 1884, when Dunlap bought it, it would have had to



Fig. 6. Prototype of the famous Pearl Press. This is the patent model submitted by W.H. Golding. (U.S. Patent no. 145101, 2 December 1873.) (Courtesy Smithsonian Institution and Elizabeth Harris, Curator, Graphic Arts Division.)

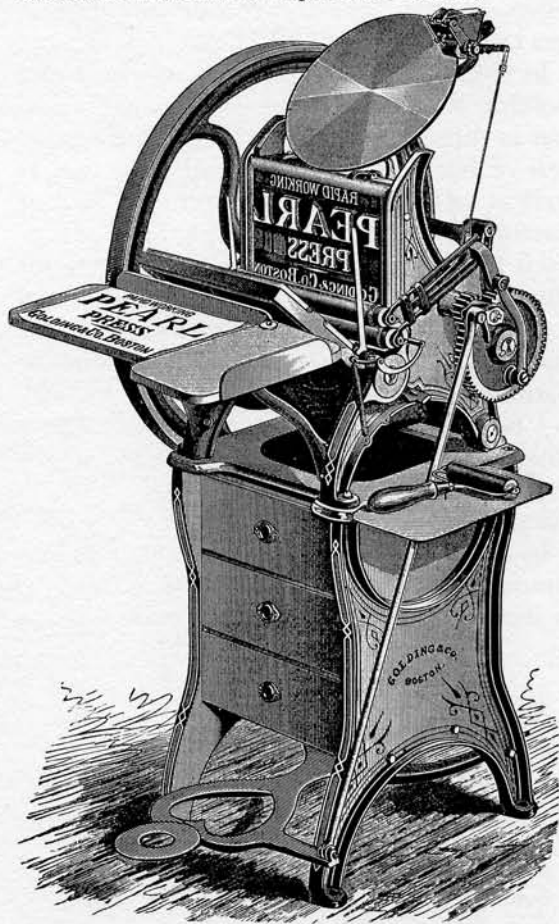


Fig. 7. The "old-style" Pearl Press, Golding's most popular product, still in use by amateur printers across the country. From the 1881 catalogue of Golding & Co.

3. Information about Dennison from an obituary in *Inland Printer* 31 (August 1903), 762.

4. Truman J. Spencer, *The History of Amateur Journalism* (New York: Fossils, 1957), p. 14.

5. From a 1932 letter by George T. Dunlap to the Kelsey Company. Quoted from the unpublished papers of Glover Snow by courtesy of Eugene Mosher, The Kelsey Company, Meriden, Conn. Glover Snow was hired by William A. Kelsey and served as director of the company from about 1923 to the 1960s.

be a second-hand press, because Golding had stopped manufacturing it. The other presses that Dunlap tried but found inferior to the Pearl were a Baltimorean, a Model, and then another Baltimorean.

After the Pearl evolved into a treadle press it was exhibited at the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia in 1876, where it won the highest award for small presses. Similar awards followed in 1878 at Berlin and in 1881 at Melbourne. Meanwhile, Golding had developed a line of hand presses called the Official, and soon they also became available with flywheel and treadle.

About the year 1875 Golding & Co., as it was now called, moved from Kilby Street to 40 Washington Square. A map showing the new location was printed in the 1875 catalogue. In 1876 the name Washington Square was changed to Fort-Hill Square.

In 1943 E. F. Peckham, who had worked for Golding more than sixty years earlier, noted that in those days Golding was doing a good deal of business, printing labels and tags as well as selling printing equipment. Two or three girls were employed to split fonts of type from the type foundries into card fonts for amateur printers. Peckham remembered that the firm sometimes received orders for as many as 24 Pearl presses at a time from the Barnhart Brothers and Spindler type foundry in Chicago. But when business became slow, Golding would send Peckham out into the streets of Boston to distribute handbills advertising his small printing outfits.⁶

In 1880, at the age of thirty-five, Golding married Georgiana Evert Putnam of Chelsea. In those years, in spite of the success of the

Pearl, the Official, and the Golding Jobber, the business was still shaky, according to Henry L. Bullen. Writing fifty years later, Bullen reported that frequently Golding had difficulty in paying his workmen on payday.⁷ In 1882 Golding hired the twenty-five-year-old Bullen to edit and print his house organ, *The Bulletin of Novelties*. Bullen's salesmanship and lively style immediately helped business, and a year later he was promoted to sales manager. As Bullen put it in 1936, "Mr. Golding from a condition approaching bankruptcy was on the way to becoming a millionaire."⁸ Both reports seem to be exaggerations, but there is no doubt that in the 1880s Golding & Co. was flourishing.

One of Bullen's tasks was to overcome the resentment of professional printers against Golding's early flirtation with the amateur market. Amateurs, scornfully called bedroom printers, were seen as a threat to the professional's livelihood. In the July 1886 *Bulletin of Novelties* Bullen wrote, "In spite of a stupid prejudice, born of the knowledge that we originally catered to the now-defunct amateur trade, we stand at the head of the professional trade in this city."⁹ The following month he wrote, "The 'amateur' bugaboo dies slowly but surely. We are not catering to the amateur trade now at all, but confine our efforts to building up trade with regular printers."¹⁰

In September of 1885, when the New England Type Foundry failed after more than sixty years in business, Golding purchased the type, good will, and manufacturing plant. Within a few weeks he sold the good will and machinery to the Boston Type Foundry and advertised the type for sale at a discount.¹¹

In 1886 Bullen invented the Standard Job Composing Stick, which was patented in Golding's name.¹² This was the first composing stick to be marked off in picas—something not possible until the standardization of the pica by agreement of most American type foundries in that year. Before that, every foundry's pica varied from most others, and each compositor set his stick differently for each font of type. In 1887, through Bullen's advertising, Golding & Co. was among the first to promote type cast in the new point system.

6. Based on a conversation between Glover Snow and E. F. Peckham, 8 June 1943. From the unpublished papers of Glover Snow, quoted by courtesy of Eugene Mosher.

7. Henry Lewis Bullen, *Catalogue and List Prices of Duplicates... Offered for Sale by the Typographic Library and Museum of The American Type Founders Co.* (Jersey City: American Typographic Library and Museum, 1936), p. 64.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 64.

9. *Bulletin of Novelties* 10 (July 1886).

10. *Ibid.*, 11 (August 1886).

11. *Ibid.*, 3 (December 1885).

12. Henry L. Bullen, *Duplicates of Type Specimen Books*, 1934, p. v.



Fig. 8. The Golding factory as it appeared in a wood engraving in the 1884 catalogue of Golding & Co. The building at the left (with smoke pouring from the chimney) is still standing.



Fig. 9. View of the Golding factory buildings in Fort-Hill Square, ca. 1895. The two buildings at the left are still standing. (Courtesy Barbara Golding Blanchard.)

Do Your Own Printing
 NO TYPE SETTING! NO TROUBLE! NO EXPENSE!
 except for ink and paper, after procuring one of GOLDING & CO.'S OFFICIAL PRESSES, and an Electrotype for printing Labels, Billheads, Cards, Circulars, etc.

Outfits from \$1 up
 Send 3c stamp for Illustrated Catalogue of Presses, Tools, Type, etc.
GOLDING & CO., Manuf'rs, Fort Hill Sq, Boston.

FAMILY PRINTER
 BEAUTIFUL invention for marking Clothing and printing Cards, &c. An article that everybody should have. Alphabets of type to print any name, business or address. Very profitable, amusing and instructive for the young.
No. 1 \$1 with 8 alphabets type. **No. 2 \$2** with 8 alphabets. **No. 3 \$3**, with 11 alphabets. Type Case, Ink and Pad included. Delivered anywhere by mail free. Agents wanted
GOLDING & CO., 40 Fort Hill Sq, Boston

OFFICIAL PRESS.
 EVERY BUSINESS MAN, to be successful, should have one, for doing his own printing and advertising. It will pay for itself over and over again. It is simple and strong in construction; beautiful in design and finish; easy and rapid in operation. Print 3x4-1/2 to 3x12 inches. Cost \$7 to \$65. Send 3c stamp for Illustrated Catalogue of Printing Outfits from \$1 up.
GOLDING & CO., FORT HILL SQ, BOSTON.

PEARL PRINTING PRESS.
 Rotary Foot or Steam Power. From new and improved patterns. For printing cards, billheads, labels, statements, circulars, etc., it has no superior. It is unequalled for ease and rapidity of operation, compactness, durability, beauty of design and mechanical construction. With Automatic Card Dropper prints 3000 cards an hour. W. C. Hanson, the Card Printer, has twenty in use. Sizes, 3x7 to 12x18 inches. Cost \$35 to \$350. For sale by the dealers in printing materials. Send 3c stamp for Catalogue of Presses, Tools, Type, etc.
GOLDING & CO., Manufacturers, Fort Hill Sq., BOSTON.

Fig. 10. A Golding trade card that attempted to sell the do-it-yourself concept to the businessman of the 1880s. (Courtesy Jack Golden.)

GOLDING & CO.
 Managers of
The Printer Manufacturer's Co.
 14 Kilby St., Boston.

PRINTING PRESSES.
 Golding's Job Press, \$20. Self-Inking Pearl Press, \$25 to \$135. Diamond Press, \$30 to \$15. Embossing Presses, \$5 to \$12.

PRINTING STAMPS.
 Dating and Numbering Stamps, from \$2 to \$15. Self-Inking Stamps, \$6 to \$12. Elastic Stamps for printing on any material, from \$1 to \$10. Family Stamps for marking linen, &c., \$1 to \$3. Steel Stamps for marking tools, &c., from \$1 up.

PRINTING MATERIALS.
 Type, Cuts, Inks, Bronze, Rollers, Furniture, and Tools.

TAGS.
 Double-Head the strongest and best. Common and cheap Tags for local use. Merchandise Tags for Dry and Fancy Goods, etc.

LABELS.
 Adhesive Labels, Letters and Numbers. Useful in any business. Stick to anything.

Fig. 11. Advertisement of Golding & Co. in the Boston Almanac, 1875. The Pearl hand-press similar to the patent model is seen at the left.



Fig. 12. Nameplate of the Pearl press, showing the patent dates. (Courtesy Stephen O. Saxe.)

By the time Bullen left Golding's employ in 1888, business was booming. The firm had greatly increased its manufacturing space, and in 1890 it expanded further and occupied still another building in Fort-Hill Square. Among the company's best-known products were the Pearl, Official, and Golding Jobber presses; the Fairhaven country newspaper cylinder press; the Little Giant Rule and Lead Cutter (also invented by Bullen and patented in Golding's name); and a complete line of printers' equipment and supplies. Type from major foundries was sold, but never manufactured, by Golding & Co.

In 1895 the Improved Pearl Press was introduced, incorporating some of the advanced mechanical and design features of the Golding Jobber. The new Pearl found immediate favor, but the well-established old model continued to be manufactured. In the most popular size, 7" x 11", the new model was 140 pounds heavier and more rigid. It had a throwoff lever to prevent a faulty impression without stopping the press, and it also had better ink distribution and a more efficient motion. The ease of running a Pearl was—and is—mainly due to efficient gearing. Only three revolutions of the flywheel are needed to produce an impression. In addition, there is a long dwell, during which the platen is open and motionless to allow feeding. A catalogue states, "Those familiar with the capacities of the press are not satisfied with less than from 2500 to 3600 impressions per hour on ordinary work, and this does not by any means represent the limit at which it can be run."¹³ It does not seem likely that many printers could feed the press for long at 3600 impressions an hour, or one impression each second, although no doubt the press could run even faster.

In the course of the years small changes appeared in all models of the Pearl, although the basic presses remained much the same. "Im-

13. *The Pearl Press* (Boston: Golding Manufacturing Co.) [ca. 1904], p. 25.

14. *Revised Illustrated Price List of New Machinery and Materials* (London: Frederick Ullmer, Ltd., 1902), p. 19.

15. Appraisal of the estate of William H. Golding, Norfolk County Probate Court, Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 18 October 1916.

proved" models had the year of manufacture cast into the side of the base in the early days, and they are therefore easy to date. In later years the practice was discontinued. The serial number for any Pearl press can be found at the top center of the bed of the press, directly under the bottom rim of the ink disc. However, the serial number seems to correlate only with the sequence of manufacture in any year, not with the year of manufacture. More research needs to be done in relating serial numbers to years.

Golding presses and other equipment are distinctive in their mechanical sophistication and elegance of form. The subtleties of their undulating curves are not to be seen in today's world, where the straight-edge is basic to industrial design.

By the end of the nineteenth century Golding's presses were being sold all over the world. The company, now styled "Golding Manufacturing Co.," had sales offices in New York, Philadelphia, and Chicago. Many American type foundries sold a wide range of Golding equipment through their own catalogues. In London J. P. McEvoy, who was sales agent for the MacKellar, Smith & Jordan foundry, also sold Golding Jobbers and Pearls, advertising them regularly in *British Printer*.

Success produced imitators. In 1902 the leading British printers' supply house, Frederick Ullmer, Ltd., offered the Little Standard Press, "made from entirely new patterns."¹⁴ It was in fact the old-style Pearl, with Ullmer's name cast on the side of the base. Ullmer did provide the press with a throwoff, an improvement that Golding never felt was necessary for the smaller old-style Pearls; only the large, 9 x 14 old-style Pearl was made with a throwoff.

By 1906 Golding had outgrown the sprawling buildings in Fort-Hill Square. The factory moved to new, larger buildings in Franklin, about thirty miles from Boston, keeping salesrooms at Fort-Hill Square. Golding, by this time the father of two sons and a daughter, moved into a house on Alpine Street in Franklin.

William H. Golding died on 21 August 1916 at the age of seventy-one and was buried in the family plot at Newton Centre cemetery. He left an estate valued at about \$223,000 (not \$3,000,000, as Bullen later claimed.)¹⁵ The company was continued as a co-partnership, with the elder son, W. H. Golding Jr., as senior partner and the younger son, Gilbert, as the assistant factory superintendent. Two years later, in 1918, the company was sold to American Type Founders Co., which continued to manufacture the full line of Golding presses and equipment.

In 1927 production ceased and the factory and Golding inventory were taken over by the Thomson National Company, manufacturer of Colt's Armory Press. (Thomson is still manufacturing presses in the former Golding factory building.) Thomson sold off the remaining Golding presses and parts over the years.

But even then the story of the Pearl press did not end. In 1936 the Craftsmen Machinery Company of Dedham, Massachusetts, obtained the jigs for the 7 x 11 Improved Pearl, making and selling them under the name CMC Jobber for many years. Catalogues as late as 1955 show the Pearl, with "CMC" in raised letters on the treadle in place of "Pearl," but in all other details the same. In that year it sold for \$495. Although Craftsman has not made the press for many years, presumably it still owns the jigs and casting patterns. There remains the possibility, therefore, that an Improved Pearl No. 11 will go back into production some day.

Thanks are due to Barbara Golding Blanchard, granddaughter of W. H. Golding, for much family information, photographs, and access to early Golding catalogues; to the late Georgina S. Golding, also a granddaughter of W. H. Golding, for reading an early draft of the manuscript and making valuable additions and corrections; and to Elizabeth Harris, Curator of the Graphic Arts Division, Smithsonian Institution, Rollo Silver, and Martin K. Speckter, for encouragement, for suggestions editorial and otherwise, and for sustained interest in the research.