

Hatch Show Print

“Letterpress printing” is a term for printing text with movable type. The raised surfaces of the metal letters are inked, then pressed against paper or a smooth surface to obtain an image in reverse. William H. Hatch (1833–1896) ran a print shop in Prescott, Wisconsin, with his two sons, Charles R. and Herbert H. In 1875, William moved his family to Nashville, where Charles and Herbert founded CR and HH Hatch, later called Hatch Show Print.

From their very first print job, the Hatch brothers achieved the artistic balance between type size and style, vertical and horizontal layout. They made posters for the circus, minstrel shows, vaudeville acts, and carnivals.

The mid-1920s to the 1950s was a golden era for country music and the printmakers who advertised for them.



Fig. 1-21. Hatch Show Print is an old-fashioned letterpress print shop, based in Nashville since 1879.

Ryman National Historical Landmark Ceremony, 2001.



Fig. 1-22. The classic letterpress poster style can still be used to proclaim just about any event or bit of news. How effectively does this birth announcement printed by Hatch serve its purpose?

Birth Announcement for Duke Rainier Rayburn, 2007.

Hatch also captured the feel of jazz and blues in the work they did for the great entertainers of the day: Cab Calloway, Bessie Smith, Duke Ellington, and Louis Armstrong.

The openness to Southern culture and advertising helped Hatch Show Print survive the comparatively lean years after 1952. While other letterpress printmakers found it hard to compete with offset printmaking, Hatch could turn to country music for continued support. The company also embraced newer forms of entertainment such as all-star wrestling and rock and roll. Today, Hatch Show Print cranks out posters for contemporary performers from Keith Urban to Margaret Cho. The traditional look of letterpress printing endures in these posters.

Teaching Tip

Explain to students that original letterpress and silkscreened works are distinct from the high-volume lithography seen in today's posters, books, and the like. The latter are created by a photographic, not a printmaking, process.

Internet Connection

For more information and examples of Hatch Prints see www.countrymusichalloffame.com/site/experience-hatch.aspx.