



School of Law

WEST'S WORDS, HO! LAW BOOKS BY THE MILLION, PLUS A FEW

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FROM THE BAG

Home Establishment of the
“National Reporter System.”
(river front.)

*1 Cornell Law Journal no. 1 (June 1894)
(between pages 98 and 99)*



WEST'S WORDS, HO!

LAW BOOKS BY THE MILLION,
PLUS A FEW

Ross E. Davies

THIS ESSAY INTRODUCES an interesting but nearly invisible artifact of American law: A promotional pamphlet titled *Law Books by the Million: An account of the largest law-book house in the world,— the home establishment of The National Reporter System and The American Digest System*. It was produced by the West Publishing Company in 1901 and is reprinted in its entirety below at pages 311 to 339 of this issue of the *Green Bag*.

Professor Robert Jarvis has quite rightly bemoaned the meager public information about John West, founder of the West Publishing Company and an important figure in American legal history.¹ A similar, albeit less severe, paucity of information plagues the West Publishing Company itself (now owned by Thomson Reuters). There isn't much out there about the company's early years, and what little there is can be strangely difficult to get hold of.² For ex-

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¹ Robert M. Jarvis, *John B. West: Founder of the West Publishing Company*, 50 AM. J. LEGAL HIST. 1, 19-22 (2010).

² Jarvis and a few other diligent scholars — notably Robert C. Berring and Thomas Woxland — have done an admirable job of unearthing and analyzing what can be found. See, e.g., *id.*; Robert C. Berring, *Full-Text Databases and Legal Research: Backing Into the Future*, 1 HIGH TECH. L.J. 27 (1986); Thomas A. Woxland, "Forever Associated with the Practice of Law": *The Early Years of the West Publishing Company*, 5 LEGAL REFERENCE SERVICES Q. 115 (1985).

ample, the biggest single source of West history – William Marvin’s 1969 book, *West Publishing Company: Origin, Growth, Leadership* – is out of print, rare, and not available on the internet. The same goes for *The Publications of West Publishing Company* and *The Romance of Law Reporting: Serving the Bench and Bar*, pamphlets published by West in 1901 and 1934 respectively.³ *Law Books by the Million* is nearly as hard to find,⁴ but at least it is in the public domain, and therefore susceptible to reproduction here. And it is worth the trouble and expense. *Law Books by the Million* provides a readable, richly illustrated narrative of the processes West used to create and disseminate its products in the early years (that is, the late 19th and early 20th centuries) of those simultaneously democratizing and costly, mutually reinforcing revolutions in American law: the expansion of the bar and the legal information explosion.⁵

Back then, not everyone was happy about the availability of millions of law books, or about publishers’ promotion of their numerous products. For example, in a March 1902 speech sponsored by the Law Association of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania Supreme Court Chief Justice James T. Mitchell rosily recalled the legal culture of his youth:

Law books then were not mere merchandise. The legal world had not yet surrendered to the manufacturer and the book-maker, nor would any publisher have dared, even if he could truthfully do so, to send out, as more than one does now, boasting circulars that he makes law books by the million. Books were written by men who had a call to write, and who sought in that way to pay their debt to their profession.⁶

³ WorldCat lists seven copies of Marvin’s book, three of the *Romance* pamphlet, and one of the *Publications* pamphlet.

⁴ WorldCat lists five copies, and there is a pdf on Google Books, at least for now.

⁵ See generally LAWRENCE M. FRIEDMAN, A HISTORY OF AMERICAN LAW chs. 11 & 12 (3d ed. 2005); LAWRENCE M. FRIEDMAN, AMERICAN LAW IN THE 20TH CENTURY ch. 2 (2002); Robert C. Berring, *Legal Research and Legal Concepts: Where Form Molds Substance*, 75 CAL. L. REV. 15 (1987).

⁶ James T. Mitchell, *Historical Address*, in ADDRESSES DELIVERED MARCH 13, 1902 AND PAPERS PREPARED OR REPUBLISHED TO COMMEMORATE THE CENTENNIAL

West's Words, Ho!

PUBLISHED WEEKLY,
By John B. West & Co.,
 60 W. Third Street, ST. PAUL, MINN.
 Terms \$3.00 per annum in Advance.

Rates of Advertising.

	Spa.	1 w.	2 w.	3 w.	4 w.	3 m.	6 m.	1 y.
1 Sq.	.75	1.30	1.90	2.45	6.00	11.65	22.50	
2 Sq.	1.50	2.60	3.60	4.50	11.80	22.50	34.25	
3 Sq.	2.10	3.75	4.90	6.00	17.25	33.00	65.25	
¼ C.	2.65	4.70	6.15	7.50	21.50	41.25	81.50	
1 C.	5.00	9.00	11.80	14.45	42.40	81.80	162.25	

1 sq. consists of one inch of the column.

We can Supply Seals of any Size or Design.



NOTARIAL SEALS, for any County, \$6.75.
 JOHN B. WEST & CO.

Advertisements in 1 The Syllabi, Oct. 21, 1876, at 1&7.

As we know with hindsight, though, in 1902 it was already too late, thank goodness, to return to a world in which only the right sorts of people were practicing law and writing law books that were generally inaccessible to the hoi polloi.⁷ Indeed, by the time Chief Justice Mitchell gave his speech, the revolution had been gathering steam for at least a generation.⁸ And for most of that time, the West Publishing Company had been in the business of marketing itself. In fact, much of even the first issue (in October 1876) of West's first regular publication, *The Syllabi*, consisted of advertising for a variety of products sold by West, from books to seals to advertising space.⁹

West's marketing program eventually expanded to include nifty, informative pamphlets. The first, shorter version of what would become *Law Books by the Million* was published in 1893 under the title *A Description of the Home Establishment of the National Reporter System, with some account of the business of the West Publishing Company*. It

CELEBRATION OF THE LAW ASSOCIATION OF PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA, 1802-1902, at 13, 15 (1906; 1954 prtng.).

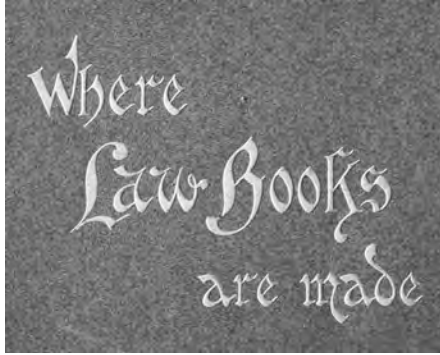
⁷ Compare, e.g., *id.*, with BARBARA BABCOCK, WOMAN LAWYER: THE TRIALS OF CLARA FOLTZ (2011).

⁸ See Berring, *Full-Text Databases*, 1 HIGH TECH. L.J. at 31 n.19 ("The literature bemoaning the volume of published cases is vast. A personal favorite is High, *What Shall Be Done with the Reports*, 16 AM. L. REV. 435 (1882).").

⁹ In a nod to its own legacy, West did republish the entire six-month run of *The Syllabi* in 1991.

received a friendly notice of its own in *Publisher's Weekly*,¹⁰ as well as the kind of compliment clumsy or lazy editors sometimes pay to work they like: the *Cornell Law Journal* published a large chunk of the pamphlet (without attribution) in its inaugural issue in June 1894.¹¹

By 1901, if not earlier, West was distributing its promotional materials with the savvy diversification of a modern direct marketer.



Law Books by the Million was available both as a free-standing booklet attractively bound in gray cardboard with the words "Where Law Books are made" embossed in silver on the front cover (that is the version held by the Library of Congress), and as an "inse[r]t in: North-

western reporter. Vol. 87, no. 8 (Sept. 28, 1901)" (that is the version in the law library at Washington & Lee University).¹²

Nor did West limit itself to advertising and pamphleteering. It was an early user of surveys sent to prospective costumers to build interest and patronage. See, for example, the postcard reproduced on the facing page (which must have been distributed in late 1905 or early 1906), inviting law students to vote for or against an "honor system" for exam administration. The results of the balloting were not, as promised, "published in the Spring issue of the American Law School Review," although a collection of comments by leading law teachers about honor codes was.¹³

¹⁰ See *Literary and Trade Notes*, PUBLISHERS' WEEKLY, Mar. 4, 1893, at 398.

¹¹ See *The Home Establishment of the National Reporter System*, 1 CORNELL L.J. 99 & facing page (June 1894). The *Cornell Law Journal* was a short-lived predecessor (the June 1894 issue was its only manifestation) of the more durable *Cornell Law Quarterly*. Ray Forrester, *Introduction to Volume 50 Cornell Law Quarterly*, 50 CORNELL L.Q. 1 (1964).

¹² See WorldCat listing.

¹³ See *Should the "Honor System" be Adopted in American Law Schools?*, 1 AM. L. SCHOOL REV. 369 (1906).

Place a
One-Cent
Stamp
Here

Post Card

Alfred F. Mason, Editor
 American Law School Review
 West Publishing Co.
 St. Paul, Minn.

A QUESTION FOR LAW STUDENTS

The Honor System

At the meeting of the American Bar Association held at Narragansett Pier in August, 1905, the President of the Association, Hon. Henry St. George Tucker, closed his address with a strong appeal for the adoption of the "Honor System" in conducting examinations in all American law schools. Mr. Tucker said:

"It is a system by which the young man at the very beginning of his legal education is brought to realize that in the crucial test to which he is subjected by examination for graduation he is not to be watched as a suspect or guarded as a felon, but he is to be allowed to work out his own salvation and his own examination with a simple reliance by those in authority, on his pledged honor, that it will be done without assistance from any source. If at the very threshold of his professional education and all through it, for three years, he realizes that a system of espionage is necessary to keep him from doing wrong, and that adopting the Spartan idea he may be guilty of any theft, if only he

omits the sin of detection, what must be the effect upon him when the system is withdrawn and he is ushered into the broad fields of his professional life, with no one then to watch him in his dealings with his client and with no eye upon him except the Eye that never slumbers nor sleeps?"

By some it is claimed that in schools where the "Honor System" has been adopted it has worked like a charm in creating a manly sentiment of honor and integrity and a corresponding scorn of chicanery and deception, not only during the period of examination, but in all the paths of college life, and while occasionally some are found to violate its rules, they are, under the system, summarily dealt with by the student body without the aid of, or even consultation with, the faculty, and are thereby compelled to leave the institution in disgrace, while their punishment and their example tend to deter others who may be weak.

There are always two sides to every question, and some law school professors do not believe that the substitution of student control of examinations for faculty control would prove a success.

What is the opinion of the law student himself on this question?

To Law Students

Students in all law schools are urged to express their opinions in the form of a vote on the following question:

Would the "Honor System" in connection with conducting examinations prove successful in your school, or, if it is now in effect, is it a success?

Yes	No
-----	----

Signed by _____

Name of School _____

The results of the vote will be published in the Spring issue of the American Law School Review.

(Please detach and mail this Card)



Furthermore, West plainly discovered long ago a fundamental marketing truth that it continues to act on today: customers like knickknacks. In days of yore, the company passed out goodies ranging from bridge playing card sets packaged in miniature volumes of the *United States Code Annotated*, to paperweights crafted to look like medallions with Chief Justice John Marshall's profile on one side and the West Key Number System key on the other. (Was it some West employee or contractor with a sense of humor who selected Redislip® brand playing cards to go in the mini-USCAs?)



West's Words, Ho!

Roughly a century later, environmentally friendly biodegradable “Westlaw Next” travel mugs are the promotional treasure du jour – as legions of law students, practitioners, public servants, professors, and members of other West constituencies know from recent personal experience.¹⁴ There is probably a book’s worth of history, entertainment, and wisdom in a full collection of 100-plus years’ worth of West Publishing Company tchotchkes.

And despite its acquisition by a larger corporate entity in 1996, West’s promotional flare has persisted, obviously undimmed. Consider, for example, the West-ern style announcement in January 2000 on its Westlaw website of the on-line availability of the laws of the United Kingdom:

This royal throne of kings, this sceptered isle,
This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars,
This other Eden, demi-paradise,
This realm of laws computerize(-d)

Well, we can’t all be Shakespeare. But now we can all access the laws of the United Kingdom on Westlaw. Access the United Kingdom Law Reports database UKL-RPTS for official transcripts of judgments from United Kingdom courts.¹⁵

¹⁴ See, e.g., Greg McNeal, *Westlaw Next and the Magical Westlaw Mug*, THE FACULTY LOUNGE, www.thefacultylounge.org/2010/09/westlaw-next-and-the-magical-westlaw-mug.html (Sept. 2, 2010).

¹⁵ Compare *Welcome Window*, www.westlaw.com (vis. Jan. 10, 2000), with WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, *RICHARD II*, act 2, scene 1 (1595). As all good lawyers know, little new work in the law is ever entirely new, and so it may be that West was inspired by the earlier work of an old competitor, the Bancroft Whitney Company. Here is the story, as told by Professor Richard Sloane:

An Oakland, California lawyer wrote to the Bancroft Whitney Company on receipt of their new California Code for Civil Procedure:

“Press on the work, in evolution,
Till th’ annotated Constitution
Stands forth beside the four fine Codes –
And then I’ll write you no more odes.”

– Wm. R. Davis.

Bancroft Whitney was touched and assigned its resident poet to reply:

Or picture, if you will, what happens when someone visits the West corporate website (west.thomson.com) today, and searches the site for “stress toys.” Click on the links, it’s fun.¹⁶

From *The Syllabi* to stress toys, with *Law Books by the Million* and its ilk somewhere in between, West’s long program of self-promotion symbolizes and, to some extent explains, the evolution of the law-book publishing business and its relationship to the bar. The same up-to-the-minute website that features the Stress Toys Videos also boasts, in an echo of *Law Books by the Million* that is also a reminder of what matters most to a company that has been producing law books for more than 130 years, “West annually publishes more than 66 million legal books and 500 CD libraries.”¹⁷



“We just received your timely ode,
As you received the Pom’roy Code
At first we thought it rather rash,
Until we saw your check for cash.
The Civil Code will soon appear,
And then the Penal ends this year,
Except with Notes the Constitution
Will end just now the evolution.
But later on when laws are fixed
In places that are not so mixed,
The Code Political, without flaws,
Completes the work with General Laws.”

69 LAW LIBR. J. 576, 586 (1976) (citing 35 AM. L. REV. 902 (1901)).

¹⁶ *Westlaw Stress Toy Videos*, west.thomson.com/westlaw/advantage/stress-toy/demo1.aspx (*The Original*; vis. May 18, 2011); west.thomson.com/westlaw/advantage/stress-toy/demo2.aspx (*The Sequel*; vis. May 18, 2011).

¹⁷ *About Us*, west.thomson.com/about/default.aspx (vis. May 18, 2011).



LAW BOOKS BY THE MILLION

AN ACCOUNT OF THE LARGEST LAW-BOOK HOUSE IN THE WORLD,—
THE HOME ESTABLISHMENT OF THE NATIONAL REPORTER SYSTEM
AND THE AMERICAN DIGEST SYSTEM

West Publishing Co.

The West Publishing Co. presents its compliments to the members of the Bench and Bar of America, and extends to them all a hearty invitation to visit its building and offices, in St. Paul.

A TRIP THROUGH THE BUILDING always proves to be an unexpected revelation of the magnitude and of the interesting character of the business which is carried on in the home establishment of the National Reporter System. This business is one which the New York Nation declares “makes St. Paul, for at least one purpose, the intellectual center of the United States.” It is the business of applying the most advanced methods of law publishing, on the most extensive scale, to the body of judicial decisions which is of the greatest practical importance to the active part of the legal profession of the country.

If you, to whom this booklet is addressed, come to St. Paul, we shall be very glad to see you, and to take you through the building. In the meantime, these pictures will serve to give you an idea of what we would have to show. Perhaps they may induce you to come! It is incidentally interesting to see how it comes about that a Western house should be at the head of the law publishing business, not only of this country, but of the world.

St. Paul 1901. Editors' note: The odd fuzzy borders on some pictures are in the originals.

West Publishing Co.

THE BUILDING,—THIRD STREET ENTRANCE.



THE BUILDING,—BACK VIEW, SHOWING
HILLSIDE.

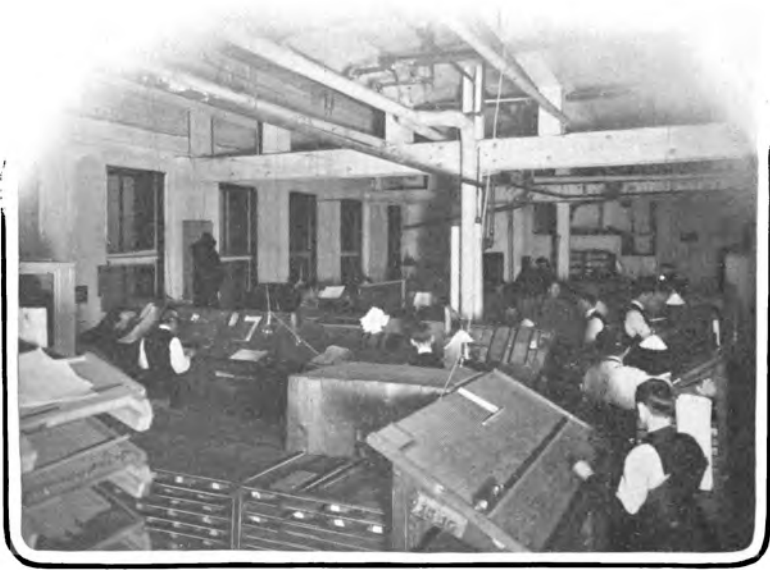
The West Publishing Co.'s building is built, not upon a hill, but upon the side of a hill. It is an advantageous position for a manufacturing establishment carrying hundreds of tons of heavy machinery above its foundations, but it does not make as impressive a building from the front as it would if all of its nine stories were above the street level. This modesty prepares a surprise for the visitor, who



A SECTION OF THE PROOF-READING DEPARTMENT.

finds himself descending and still descending, to floor below floor, all lit with floods of strong southern sunshine, whereas logically (i.e. from the logic of the Third Street entrance) they ought to be plunged in underground darkness. This arrangement is of great advantage in the matter of light for the storage rooms and it brings the general offices and sales-rooms (which are necessarily placed above the departments operating heavy machinery, and which are actually on the sixth floor) to the street floor in front; while the furnace room, requiring carloads of coal, and the storage-rooms, taking in carloads of paper and stereotype metal, are easily accessible from the railroad tracks in the back yard.

If the visitor begins his tour by taking the elevator to the top of the building, he will be led first to the proof-reading department, which occupies the entire ninth story. This is a superimposed story, not seen from the street, known to the jovial occupants as the "Roof Garden." Here there are twenty separate rooms for isolated proof-readers, besides long common rooms in the center for related work.



ONE END OF THE COMPOSING ROOM.

The proof-reading on law books is very much more exacting than ordinary proof-reading. It is done by trained experts, and the minuteness of their scrutiny would be a revelation to the ordinary proof-reader, no less than to the general reader, who takes typographical perfection for granted,—though any one familiar with type knows that more natural depravity inheres in those blocks of metal than in any other inanimate creature known. Every page is read twice, by different readers, trained in familiarity with legal phraseology. The rules regarding the “style” and make-up of the matter make a good-sized volume, but they are a necessary guide in unifying the work of so large a number of individual workers, reading hundreds of pages every day.

The composing room occupies, with the adjoining stereo-type room, the entire eighth floor. The spacious room, with its rows after rows of printers’ “cases,” its fonts of perfect type, its orderly lines of expert workmen, and its complete appliances of the latest and most approved sort for handling work expeditiously and to advantage, is a revelation to a man familiar with the ordinary printing

office. The compositors are an exceptionally intelligent set of men, dignified and workmanlike in appearance. Bookwork is a different thing from newspaper work, and legal bookwork is of the higher grades of that. Some of the men have been in their present positions fifteen and twenty years,— a fact which has its bearing upon the high standard maintained. The capacity of this department is almost fabulous. The American Digest of 1898 contains 17,000,000 ems, or about 34,000,000 separate letters,— matter which would fill about 25 volumes, if set like the ordinary State Reports or text books. It would take one average compositor over seven years to set it, but it was handled here in about two weeks, without interruption to other current work. For the year ending Aug. 31, 1900, the output was 254,000,000 ems, which would be the equivalent of from 300 to 400 volumes of ordinary law reports, or say 800 to 900 books of average literary size,— two or three every working day of the year. The combination of tremendous speed with a high grade of work is something that could be attained only in this exceptional sort of an establishment, where each man is an expert and the men are many. The work done sometimes in one day here would keep an ordinary print-shop of ten or fifteen handwork men occupied for a year.

One important element in the attainment of this speed is, of course, the development towards perfection of typesetting machines. These elaborate pieces of mechanism have only within the last few years become practicable, though the dream of them has hung before inventors for over a century. Recent developments have succeeded each other so rapidly that expensive machines which six or eight years ago were the best of their kind, and cost fifteen hundred dollars to two thousand apiece, are today worth the price of old iron only.

The Linotype, of which there are 16 in this room, all in active operation (and during the larger part of the year busy night as well as day), casts lines of “type” in the shape of small metal bars, by means of a little pot of molten metal hidden under its innumerable attachments. If we were to attempt to do by hand composition the work which is here handled by about 30 men with the use of the



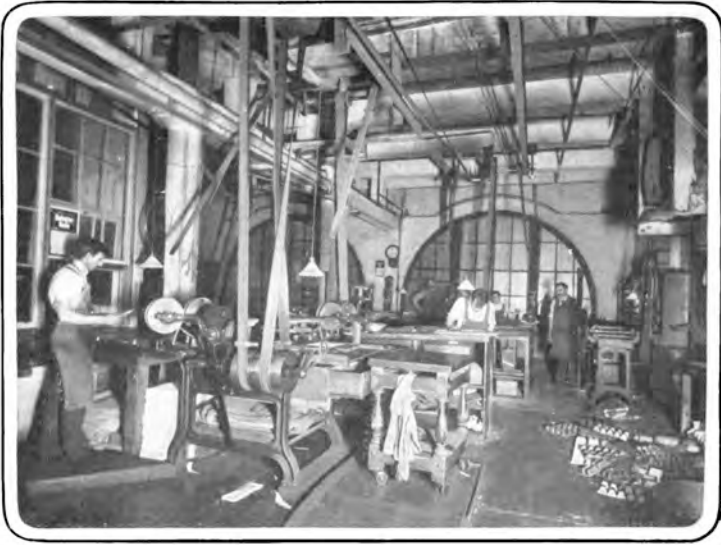
TYPESETTING MACHINES.

Linotype, it would require the building of an additional story capable of accommodating 150 workmen.

The processes of stereotyping are among the most picturesque of the printing business. Here are kettles of molten metal, waiting to be turned into "plates" to print from; here are wheels and saws and knives that trim and shape the solid metal as easily as though it were cheese.

A mold of the type-page is made of stereotyper's paper which is beaten down, wet, into the type form, and then baked hard. From this the metal plate is cast, and from these plates, not from type, the book is printed. After the first printing, the plates are stored away in underground vaults, and preserved for the reprint editions which are constantly called for.

The editorial department is naturally the most interesting to a lawyer, for here he sees the actual process by which "the law as it is" is put within his reach. It occupies the entire seventh floor of the building. Here are the editors, the revisors, the digesters, and the



THE STEREOTYPING ROOM.



A GROUP OF EDITORS.

annotators, each of them a lawyer first and an experienced “law-writer” next. To bring together and train this efficient corps has been the work of years; and as a body there is not another to match it. The tests given applicants make it certain that only lawyers of

more than average ability, and with special mental aptitude for this class of work, are engaged in this very important position. A lawyer of scholarly tastes and abilities finds a more attractive field in legal literary work than in the competitive struggle which awaits him if he enters the practice, and the rewards, if less dazzling, are more assured.

Instead of being left to follow individual whims and theories, the editors act under an elaborate code of Instructions, which is the outcome of experience in reporting over 275,000 cases. No report is published until it has been carefully examined and revised. The general recognition of the excellence of the editorial work upon the Reporters is amusingly illustrated by some leading law journals, which often adopt, not only the text of the opinion from the Reporters, but headnote and statement of fact as well, without taking the precaution to indicate that they were only borrowers, and not sponsors.

The editorial standard, placed high at the beginning, has been constantly advanced, and the question of expense is never considered when the editorial integrity of a piece of work is concerned. The adherence to this policy has justified such comments as the following from the late Thomas G. Shearman of New York City, author of *Shearman & Redfield on Negligence*: "The American Digest is so far superior to any other digest which has ever been published, either in America or England, as really to admit of no comparison."

In the digests, the advantage resulting from the uniform methods possible to a corps of co-workers is manifest. The *Century Digest*, for instance, would not be a possibility on any other basis. It is coming out at the average rate of nearly a volume a month, each volume being equivalent to a digest of one hundred volumes of reports; and the distribution of these hundreds of thousands of digest paragraphs is made according to a scientific and logical classification of the law, which has been carefully worked out down to the smaller subdivisions of the subjects. The "American Digest classification" has been recommended by the American Bar Association for universal adoption by digesters, as the best basis for a uniform classification of the law.

Law Books by the Million



EDITORIAL ROOM OF THE CENTURY DIGEST.



FIRE-PROOF STORAGE ROOM FOR CENTURY DIGEST MANUSCRIPT.



THE CLERICAL CORPS CONNECTED WITH THE EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT.

The Century Digest editors are grouped in a room by themselves. The manuscript material, written on slips for easier classifying, is stored till wanted in a fire-proof room in the Annex, where it is in the charge of a corps of clerks, who send to the editors at any time any special section that may be needed. Every assistance is given to the editors in the way of clerks, stenographers, and all sorts of ingenious mechanical appliances.

In this department of assistants are the “verifiers,” who examine every citation to make sure that title, volume, and page are correctly given; the copy preparers, who go over the manuscript to see that they are typographically ready for the printer’s unreasoning acceptance; the record keepers of various sorts, copyists and assistants, acting under the direct orders of the editors,— numbering in all over 150 persons, mostly young women. There is, necessarily, much detail connected with the handling of the opinions preliminary to publication. They come here from all the states in manuscript form,— a form of “report” with which the legal profession was very familiar before the “advance sheets” of the Reports were thought of, and they must be recorded and sent to the editors in turn, and

Law Books by the Million



THE EDITORIAL LIBRARY.

checked at every stage of progress toward the printed report. This department is as thoroughly organized and as fully equipped as any in the building.

The editorial library, which is in constant requisition, is probably one of the most completely equipped reference law libraries in the country. All citations of cases, whether in a decision, note, statement, or elsewhere, are verified before they go out in print by a reference to the original volumes or from carefully compiled tables. Thousands of errors in the manuscripts are corrected in this way annually. Every lawyer will realize the importance of this work from a memory of time and patience wasted by “miscitations.”



LOOKING ACROSS THE PRESS ROOM.

The press-room, where the actual printing is done, is down on one of the lower floors,— a large, airy, and well-lighted room, specially built and fitted up for the accommodations of these busy and heavy machines, which are kept running both day and night during a great part of the year. Here tons of blank paper are taken in, and turned out as printed records of judicial decisions, to affect, directly or indirectly, the personal and property interests of our 76,000,000 persons.

The importance of perfect appliances here is made clear when the pressman explains that carelessness in his department would spoil a piece of work to which every other department might have contributed its best. In fact, from the pressman's point of view, neither the paper manufacturer, nor the typesetter, nor the printer who sets the type, nor the laborious proof-reader, nor ever the august tribunal which promulgated the opinions, is quite so important a factor in producing the perfect law book at last as the man who sees that the forms "register" all right, and that the ink does not "smooch" or the fresh pages "offset."

Law Books by the Million



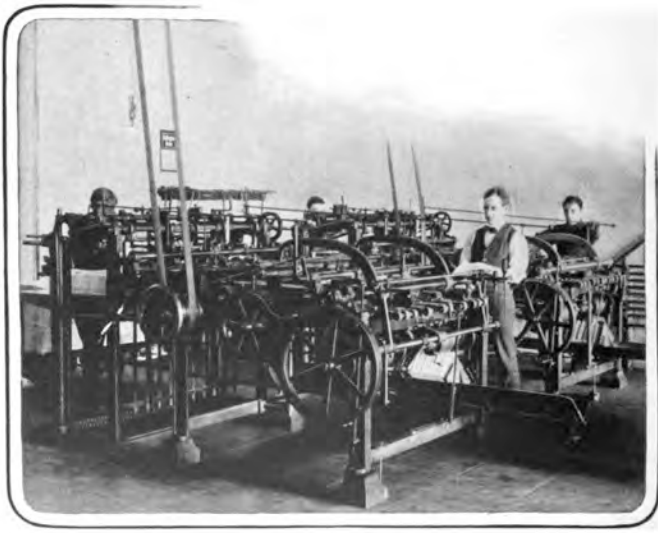
These storage vaults, used exclusively for the preservation of the metal plates, which constitute one of the valuable assets of a great publishing house, are burrowed into the sandstone of the hillside, and, though they open out on the press-room at their entrance, their course runs 80 feet below the surface of the earth,— five stories down from the front entrance. Here the plates are filed away, page by page, and volume by volume, in exact order, at hand instantly when wanted,



UNDERGROUND PLATE VAULTS.

yet safe from fire, flood and cyclone. The vaults are nearly a quarter of a mile in length, contain over 2,500,000 pounds of stereo plates, the metal of which is worth at market prices over \$150,000, and which represent an original cost for manuscript and composition of over \$3,000,000. Only those plates are preserved which are needed for reprinting, and some are always in use to meet the demand for back volumes.





AUTOMATIC FOLDERS.

The automatic folders, which take the sheets of paper, each with 32 printed pages on it, from the presses, and fold them exactly and with marvelous rapidity into the “signature” required in the book, are wonderful pieces of mechanical ingenuity. A pile of the printed double sheets from the press is laid upon the table, and the wheels are started. At once a rubber finger, which works with a comical imitation of consciousness doubles up a corner of the top sheet, and pushes it on until it is caught by the revolving belts, and shifted on to be suspended over what looks like the mouth of a small maelstrom of machinery. There it is sucked own into a tangle of wheels and belts and rods and blunt knives, and what happens to it there no man knows; but when it escapes at last it is not torn to ribbons at all, but the two sheets are separated and neatly folded by four distinct folds, and the 32 pages have found their consecutive arrangement.

Adjoining the press-room is the store-room for the paper. Bales and bundles of paper, and bales and bundles beyond that again. They are brought in here at the rate, on an average, of a carload every five days,— and of course taken out to feed the sturdy appetite of the presses at about the same rate of speed.



STOCK ROOM FOR PAPER.

Our paper is made specially for us (and has been for nearly twenty years) by one of the largest millers of the country. It is a rag paper,— which means that it is a superior paper. Wood-stock papers, owing to the cheapness, are very commonly used, even in books where one would not expect them; and the processes of manufacture often give them a superficial finish which makes them look as well as rag paper,— at first. But it is impossible to give them the wearing qualities of the more costly rag paper, and the books will unfailingly show the difference in time.

On the lowest floor of all are the boiler and engine rooms. This engine has for years sent the power for machinery to all the manufacturing departments, and now stands waiting to throw itself into the breach if at any time there should be a failure on the part of the electric motors with which the building has been newly fitted. The boilers supply steam to heat all parts of the 3½-acre building, with its many miles of steam pipes.

Turning to reascend, we stop at the bindery on the fourth floor, where we find tables and tables and tables crowded with books in different stages of undress. The wire stitchers, “smashers,” trim-

IN THE ENGINE ROOM.



IN THE BOILER ROOM.

mers, hydraulic presses, etc., are all interesting examples of modern machinery; and watching them in operation makes clear the various processes, from the folding of the sheet to the polishing of the label, by which the printed paper is transformed into the familiar sheepskin-covered volumes. Twelve hundred and seventy-five of these were turned out in one day, recently, as a regular day's work.

Among the remarkable machines here are the sewing machines for books, which take in the folded sheets, and turn out books all sewed, knots tied, ready for the "smasher." One of these sewing machines will turn out 200 books while an expert hand-sewer turns out 40, and, what is even more important, it does superior work. This is not always the case with the new invention. There is generally some compensating disadvantage in the character of machine



SEWING MACHINES IN BINDERY.

work to avenge the hands from which the work has been taken, but in these machine-sewed books the advantages are all on one side. The work is firmer, more durable, and better in every way. Eight threads are used, and they are so interlocked that, even if one section be torn out of the book, the adjoining sections are not loosened. The advantages of a method of sewing that allow a book to be opened to the full without breaking is manifest in such heavy volumes as the *American Digest*. Statistics give the poorest sort of an idea of the facts, and it doesn't mean much to us when we are told that 5,000 to 6,000 sheep resign their skins every month in favor of the National Reporter System. But we are impressed in spite of ourselves when we learn that the waste clippings make a carload for the paper mill every three or four weeks.

It may be properly mentioned here that the books bound in the West Publishing Co. bindery are all bound in solid sheep,—not in skiver. Skiver is sheepskin that has been split and stretched. It costs much less than sheep, and has about one-third the durability of the



PUTTING THE COVERS ON LAW BOOKS.

solid leather. Of late years it has come into surprisingly wide use as a covering for law books, appearing even on books issued by publishers of the highest standing, though it is quite possible that the contracting binder is the responsible person in such cases. It is more than probable that the disrepute which has fallen upon sheep binding in certain localities, leading to the experimental substitution of canvas and other bindings, is due to the use of skiver. If the books bound in *this* bindery do not prove durable, that will be evidence of the intrinsic weakness of solid leather. But that evidence has not yet come in.

The mailing room shows the methods by which the advance sheets are distributed to subscribers. There are ten of these separate issues every six days, each to go out without delay to its own constituency. The loads of pamphlets ready for mailing come down in a chute from the bindery above, and the mailing clerks at a long table stamp the subscribers' names and addresses on them from long strips of printed names which might almost serve as an attorneys' directory of the United States. Then they are wrapped and dropped



MAILING THE WEEKLY ISSUES.

into the waiting pouches of one of the regulation mail racks furnished by the postoffice. This rack holds one or more mailbags for each state. They are locked and forwarded directly to the United States mail cars, and by this means the delay of sorting them at the postoffice is avoided, and several hours gained in their distribution over the country.

The advance sheets sent out from this room average over a ton a day.

This department is also the pamphlet stock room, where the back numbers are stored. From the resources of this room any lawyer can secure, by return of mail, a printed copy of any case published in the entire Reporter System,— and that means any of the 275,000 latest decisions of the country. The fee is 25 cents! This is a different situation from that which existed a few years ago, when copies of cases could only be obtained in manuscript form from the court records, and the fee for a single opinion might easily run up to from \$5 to \$10.



THE SHIPPING DEPARTMENT.

In the shipping department the books for which orders have been received from the office above are wrapped for mailing or boxed for express or freight shipment. They average from two to six tons per day throughout the year, and go to every state in the Union, and not infrequently to other countries as well.

The office details of attending to the mail orders of the business include reading and replying to from 500 to 1,000 letters every day; recording orders and shipping the books; and following the "live" accounts on our ledgers with some 30,000 customers, scattered over the whole country.

The permanent records of the office include a card list of correspondents, in a cabinet of 33 double drawers; a "financial standing" cabinet, for the guidance of the credit department in accepting orders from new and old customers; a cabinet of maps, one state to a drawer, showing by a system of colored pegs where the agents of the company are traveling or are to be sent in the future; and of course the usual equipment of ledgers and other books, necessary



OVERLOOKING THE BOOKKEEPERS.

for recording the sales and accounts, which range from 25 cents to several thousand dollars.

To keep these details in order requires a force of about a hundred clerks, grouped into the sales, bookkeeping, collection, and correspondence departments.

The book stock is in connection with the Sales Department and fills rows of shelves occupying nearly the entire front of this floor. The stock is always changing, and is always full.

It is impossible, after going over the building, to avoid a retrospective glance. The business was begun in 1876 in the corner of one basement room. The present building contains $3\frac{1}{2}$ acres floor space, and is too small for comfort. It began with no capital. The paid-up capital stock is now \$1,050,000. It began with no market, and had to make its reputation as it went along. It is now known, by report at least, to practically the entire bar of the country, and counts among its regular customers and subscribers the large majority of the book-buying element in all the states. It gives steady employment to more than 500 persons, and it does not take long for the business transacted by them to run into seven figures.



A ROW OF OFFICES.

A development so rapid and substantial is out of the ordinary. It is due to the fact that the company has had something out of the ordinary to offer; and as a matter of fact its managers are prouder of the work that it has done for the legal profession of this country than of its record for dividends. Dividends might be earned in any business, but it is not often that a private business can work incidentally a great public good. This had been notably done in the two chief publications of the West Publishing Co.,— the National Reporter System and the American Digest System.

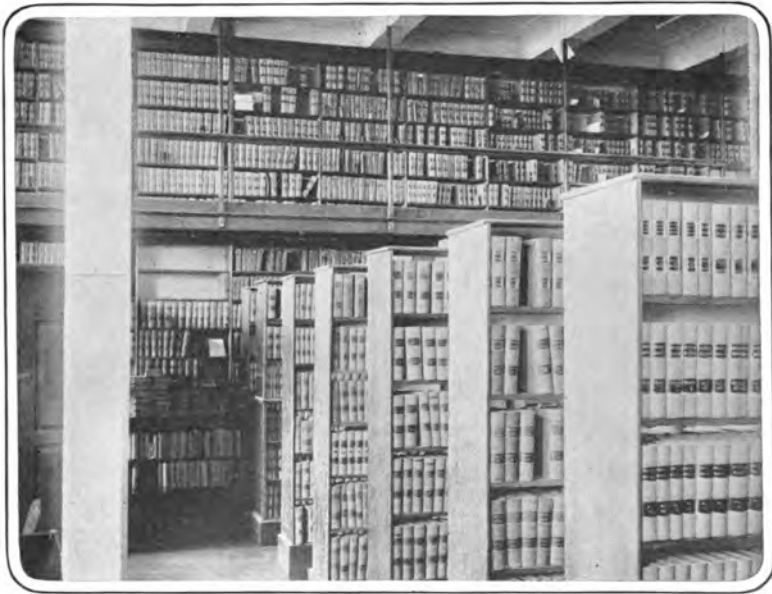
The National Reporter System has unquestionably revolutionized the whole plan of law reporting, and there are many lawyers still in active practice who can recall the old conditions, and compare them with the new. The decisions of most of the states were published, in those days, in the local series known as the State Reports, but there was no systematic control of the matter. Sometimes the state reporter was a salaried official, sometimes he was a private editor, sometimes he had a subsidy from the state for the publication,



TAKING CARE OF MAIL ORDERS.

sometimes he owned the copyright,— and increased his profits by making small volumes with few cases. Almost invariably, the publication was several years behind the courts. With the best intentions, the reporter would have to hold the opinions until a sufficient number had accumulated to make a volume; and often this period was lengthened by customer or carelessness so that the first authorized publication of a decision — which was authority from the day of its filing — might not come until from five to ten years after its rendition. The whole matter of current reporting was in a state of confusion and uncertainty which made it as difficult to find precedents as it was hazardous not to find them. The late decisions were traps for the unwary; and manuscript copies were expensive.

The establishment of the *Northwestern Reporter* was the establishment of a method in reporting which signaled a new order of things, although it covered only a group of Northwestern states, and the *National Reporter* system, bringing all the courts of the country under the same system, was not completed till some years later.



GENERAL LAW BOOKS STOCK.

This revolutionary idea was simply to report the decisions from a group of states in one "Reporter." This insured a sufficient volume of matter to make possible the weekly publication of "advance sheets" in pamphlet form. It also insured a clientele, embracing the bar of several states, which justified the low subscription price of \$5 a year. (The decisions of a single state could hardly be supplied to the limited purchasers afforded by a single state for that amount.) It is this combination of states, and co-operation of subscribers from distinct jurisdictions, which explain the utility and success of the Reporters, and which distinguish them from all previous attempts to furnish current case-law promptly and at a low price. The Reporters have brought about prompter publication and lower prices even in the "official series"; and, by taking the equivalent Reporters, it is now possible for a lawyer to cover the same range of reports as before at about one-fourth the cost, or to make the same amount of money go four times as far. And, from the professional standpoint, the immediate and full publication of decisions from all the scattered

jurisdictions has led to the harmonizing of judicial rulings, and has saved much of that "conflict" which is the greatest embarrassment of the bar,— and of the bench. The Reporters stand for prompt, systematic, exhaustive, economical, and reliable law reporting.

What the National Reporter System has done in the field of reporting, the American Digest System has done in the field of digesting. This System covers the whole field of American judicial precedents,— and it is the only enterprise which undertakes to do so. The Century Edition, in one series of fifty volumes, gives a systematic digest of all law points in all reported American cases from the earliest times down to 1896, under one alphabetical arrangement of subjects. The current edition of the American Digest supplements the Century by covering the current decisions subsequent to 1896 on the same plan; and this edition is supplemented, in turn, by the Bimonthly Digest, issued as a stout pamphlet every two months.

The West Publishing Co.'s list includes also several sets of Reports, reprint or new; text-books; statutes, digests, and other law books. A full descriptive list will be furnished on request. The number of volumes actually put out into the hands of the lawyers justifies literally the caption of the account, "Law Books by the Million."

THE CLUB.

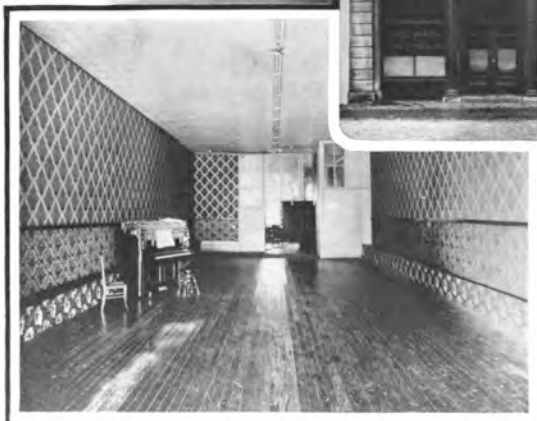
The West Publishing Co. Employees' Club is not a part of the official business of the corporation, yet it will probably be as interesting to visitors as any other department. It represents one of the latter-day efforts to give the laborer something more than his stipulated hire in recognition of his human place in the general scheme of things.

In the summer of 1900, the company rented a three-story building directly across the street from the office establishment, and placed it, rent free and furnished, at the disposal of this club, formed exclusively of employes in the business, and including nearly the entire force,— though of course membership is neither enforced nor urged. It is a voluntary association formed for the purpose of establishing a better acquaintance among the employes themselves.

FRONT OF THE CLUB HOUSE.



CLUB HOUSE—MAIN HALL.



THE LADIES ROOM IN THE CLUB HOUSE.

Law Books by the Million



THE CLUB RESTAURANT.

A CORNER OF THE CLUB READING ROOM.



THE BILLIARD ROOM.

The Club elects its own officers and directors, makes its own By-Laws, and pays its own current expenses from its monthly dues and earnings.

The Club building contains three floors and a basement. The first floor is the general assembly room, and is used for general gatherings, dancing, etc. In the summer it is used for the storage of bicycles during business hours.

At the rear of the first floor is the Ladies' Room, fitted up with easy chairs, couches with cushions, a piano, and other accessories to enable weary girls to make the most restful use of the noon hour. A girls' club holds fortnightly meetings here.

The second floor includes a reading room, equipped with all the current magazines and important journals; the restaurant, fitted up to serve "meals at all hours"; and, in the rear, the kitchen. Of course it is used chiefly for midday luncheons. The equipment is of the best. The management of the restaurant is in the hands of the Club, and is on the co-operative basis, prices being made barely high enough to cover the cost. Members thus get the benefit of the economical management.

The third floor is fitted up as a smoking room for the men, and is equipped with pool and billiard tables, tables for whist parties, etc. A whist club meets here every Saturday evening, and the other tables are in constant use every noon and evening.

A gymnasium for boys in the basement is one of the things looked forward to.

The rooms are in constant requisition by club members for evening parties, and the constant use of the different facilities afforded by the building is the best proof that it has happily filled a real need, and that it has a future of material usefulness,— and perhaps of something more.





VIEW UP THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER, AS SEEN FROM THE WEST
PUBLISHING CO. BUILDING.