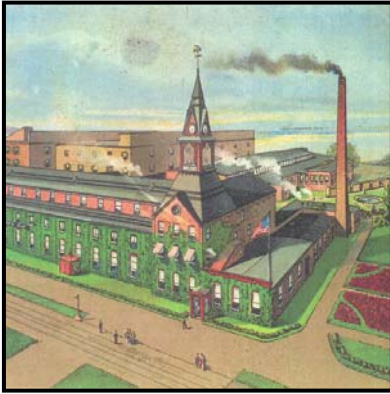


FORBES PARK: HISTORICAL NARRATIVE



EARLY HISTORY

The huge Forbes Lithograph Manufacturing Co. plant in Chelsea, Massachusetts, belongs to the legacy of William H. Forbes, an English immigrant who in 1862 started a printing business in Boston. Originally from Liverpool, Forbes came to the U.S. when he was twelve years old. He first lived with and was educated by a group of Quakers at Milton-on-the-Hudson, and later he was an apprentice with a New York lithographer named Strong. He then moved to Boston and started his own printing company.

His printing firm was originally called Forbes, Graves, & Company and was a partnership between himself, a lithographer named Otto B. Graves, and a plate printer named Thomas D. Johnson. Within a year, though, Forbes was working on his own. His first shop consisted of two rooms on the third floor of a building at the corner of Winter Street and Washington Street in Boston. The company employed Forbes, four printers, a bookkeeper, and an office boy.

In 1868 the company expanded to three floors at 159 Washington Street and then was renamed W. H. Forbes & Co. By 1870, W. H. Forbes & Co. had \$30,000 of invested capital, 55 employees, a payroll of \$24,700, and eight printing presses, one of which was a steam press. In 1872, Forbes leased four floors in a building at the corner of Devonshire and Franklin Streets, but that building was destroyed in the Great Boston Fire before the company moved. This timing proved lucky for Forbes, as the fire destroyed most other printing firms in Boston.

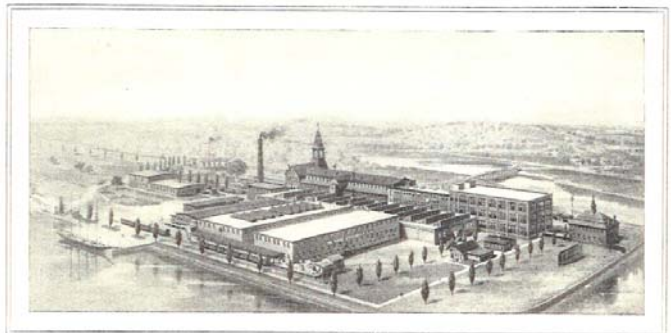
In 1875, the company became the Forbes Lithograph Manufacturing Company, a joint-stock company in which Forbes was treasurer and William P. Hunt was president. When Hunt joined the company, he brought \$70,000 and the patent to an Albortype process printing machine. The company grew quickly, such that by 1878 it had 475 employees and seventy presses.

The Forbes Company initially produced dry goods tickets, the color picture labels used for marketing cloth manufactured in New England. The business expanded to include an array of other commercial work such as labels, posters, and trade cards. In 1880, Forbes started printing replicas of famous paintings, and in 1881, the company started printing holiday greeting cards designed by a London firm. The company was also known as a pioneering producer of theatrical posters.

THE MOVE TO CHELSEA

In 1883, William Forbes decided to relocate his company to a recently built factory building in Chelsea on part of what used to be the Cary family estate. Located on the Portland Division of the Boston & Maine railroad, this site became known as Forbes Station. The area that would become the Forbes plant consisted of lots 28 through 43 in block 6 of the Cary Improvement Company lands.

In May 1881, the construction firm Mead, Mason and Company was contracted to build several industrial buildings on the site; a three-story, 60' x 200', pitch-roof machine shop (later called Building B); a two-story, 50' x 120' building connected to the machine shop (later called Building C); a brass foundry, 60' x 35' (later called Building D, probably); a boiler house, 26' x 22' (probably part of Building N); and a 100' chimney.



DECADES OF GROWTH IN CHELSEA

Orra Stone wrote of the Forbes Co.'s growth, "The policy of the company has always been that of conservative yet progressive expansion and each year has seen The Forbes Lithograph Manufacturing Company add more modern equipment and when necessary, additional structures to take care of its business." This description of a conservative growth policy, while presumably true, does not convey the incredible growth experienced by the company: in the decade between 1868 and 1878, the number of employees rocketed from 55 to 475. In 1908, the company had 800 employees. In 1930, it had 1,000. However, Stone's description does not reflect how the company's physical plant changed over time—buildings and additions built piecemeal as well as in large-scale expansion projects.

From 1886 to 1894, the date of the next available map, the Forbes Company continued to expand its physical plant. The 1894 Sanborn map showed Building B as three stories tall and the Building C as two stories tall, matching the descriptions in the lien. The three-story building was the press house, with "Glazed Paper Mf'y & Bindery" on the third floor and the bronze room and shipping area in its southern extension. The two-story building housed the transfer room on the first floor and the photographing and hand press room on the second. Building A was three stories tall. It shared Building B's functions and also had spaces for machining, engineering, and a pump and dynamo. Building N housed the boilers, and Building M was used for carpentry. One-and-a-half-story Building D housed the artists' room, which was connected to Building C by a small connector. The wood-frame building to the south was expanded or replaced with what would become Building E. This one-story building was the varnish room. The site included several small one-story buildings: a benzene house, a paper house, a zinc room, a lumber room, and an embossing center.

Between 1894 and 1911, the date of the next Sanborn Insurance map, the company expanded greatly, and the site took on the shape it has today. Two stories were added to Building C, the four floors of which were now used for lithographic transfer, job printing, photographic lithography, and designing, respectively. Building E was expanded slightly or rebuilt, and it continued to be used for paper varnishing and now was used for paper box making as well. Building B-1 was a press room, and building B-2 was a stock room. Building G was a storehouse, while Building S contained the pipe and box shop, the coated paper department, and the binding and calendar room. The company used Building K for machining, carpentry, and storage. The site also had a dining hall, pattern house, color shop, garage, etching building, and several oil and gasoline storehouses. The uses listed on the Sanborn map show some of the Forbes Company's new products: printed paper boxes and calendars, for example.

William H. Forbes was a well-liked leader as well as a very successful businessman. At an April 29, 1905 banquet commemorating the company's 43rd year of existence, the chief engineer at the Forbes Co. presented Forbes with a solid-silver, gold-lined cup that was inscribed, "Presented to William H. Forbes by the heads of departments of the Forbes lithograph manufacturing company as an expression of their deep regard for him as employer and friend." The cup was designed to resemble the company's symbol, a Viking ship. Descriptions of the company noted its good labor relations, which started under William H. Forbes and continued when his son, William S. Forbes, took over the company. For example, in 1922, the company established a "works council" for managing labor relations, and the company provided employees with insurance benefits through the Forbes Mutual Relief Association. Such practices are commonplace today but were notable in pre-New Deal America.

During World War I, the Forbes Co. produced recruiting and Liberty and Loan posters for the war effort. To facilitate this government work, the company opened an office in Washington. In 1919, one poster had to be produced on particularly short notice, so the design was flown from Washington to Boston in one of the first instances of business airmail.

The plant continued to expand between 1911 and 1928, when the company finished a "substantial expansion." During this expansion, the company moved Building D in order to add Building C-1, extended Building B-2, expanded Building E, and built Building X. The company began the construction of Building C-1 in 1911. W. S. Timmis, an architecture and engineering firm in

New York, designed the building. It was first built as three stories with a basement, but it was designed to accommodate a fourth floor. In 1917, the company added that fourth floor, which was designed by.

In 1923, the Forbes Co. built Building X, which was designed by Boston architecture firm Monks and Johnson, then located at 99 Chauncy Street. Building X's concrete construction and mushroom columns capped with pads are typical of the engineering and building innovations of the 20's. For some reason, the Forbes Co. left the top story off the northernmost bay of the building, but it later added that piece between 1933 and 1950. Monks and Johnson had a notable and prolific practice noted for its commercial and industrial work, which included buildings at the Watertown Arsenal, in Boston's Leather District, and throughout Massachusetts, New York, and Rhode Island.

The new buildings increased the plant's capacity. Building C-1 was used for manufacturing. Four-story-plus-basement Building X took over the storehouse functions of Building S, which became a shipping and manufacturing building. In 1927, the company received a license to build a new bulkhead and intake well along Chelsea Creek. This new pump house brought water to the new engine room, called Building W, which had a new smokestack built next to it.

In World War II, the U.S. government contracted the company to print French currency for the Allied invasion and reconstruction of France. The company printed two different series, as General de Gaulle declared the first series counterfeit. The company also printed maps for the military, and it subcontracted some of its machine and electrical shops to the Submarine Signal CO., which produced sonar equipment for the U.S. military.

After the war, Forbes expanded into the new field of printing on flexible packaging materials- cellophane, aluminum foil, films, and so on. The company also became a producer of multi-color school textbooks. However, analysis of Sanborn maps suggests that no major additions to the physical plant were made after 1933.

The number of employees decreased from around 1,000 in 1930 to approximately 600 in 1957. Presumably lingering effects of the Depression as well as advances in technology and automation led to this decrease. The company went out of business sometime around 1967 or 1968, though how is somewhat unclear. One source claimed that the Diamond National Corporation purchased the company in 1960, just after the company's letterpress and gravure plate departments closed, and that the lithographic department remained open until 1968. Another source, citing an interview with a former employee, claimed that in 1967 the company went out of business when it was taken over by the Diamond Match Company. While the details are not clear, the basic story is: the Forbes Company faded during the 60s, and at some point in this decline, Diamond bought the company. In 1968, Diamond sold the property to Morrell, which leased the property to a variety of small companies. Until purchased in late 2004 by Forbes Park LLC for a mixed-use development, tenants included a mattress manufacturer, a bookbinding company, auto parts companies, and a nylon products manufacturer, among others.

CONCLUSION

The Forbes Lithograph Manufacturing Company was in business for more than 100 years. For nearly all that time, it was a major player in the commercial printing industry. Its plant in Chelsea was at the forefront of printing technology. This site thrived for more than half a century. It was an economic and social center, with company banquets, baseball teams, and bowling teams. By 1902, the company had offices in London as well as various U.S. locations. In 1930, the company had offices in Chelsea, Boston, New York, Rochester, Detroit, Chicago, and Philadelphia. In 1957, the company had offices in New York, Cleveland, and Chicago, as well as representatives in Philadelphia and Michigan. Over the years, the Forbes Company produced a wide variety of printed goods: dry goods tickets, trade cards, sheet music covers, posters, can labels, wrappers, currency, billboards, textbooks, advertising materials, and packaging materials. The company and its plant in Chelsea have clearly earned a spot in American industrial history.