

# Donation of the Month

**Printing Blocks**  
2011.2  
Donor: Randy Shofner



The newspaper history in Rogers has been dominated by the Rogers Democrat started in 1898 by E.M. Funk and his son Erwin C. Funk. The Funk family kept the paper until 1929. While in their procession, the newspaper printed both the paper as well as material for commercial clients. In January 1919, the Rogers Democrat gained a rival when the Rogers Daily Post began. The Post changed hands numerous times until it landed with James P. Shofner in 1927. Shofner changed the paper's name to Rogers Daily News and after a few years sold it once again. He then purchased the Rogers Democrat along with a partner E.W. Pate. Shofner and Pate divided the newspaper's printing department with Shofner getting the commercial printing equipment and business. The printing equipment and business has stayed in the family until 2011, when those who knew of Shofner witnessed the closing of this long standing business.

Over the years Shofner's business expanded beyond printing to include selling office supplies such as typewriter ribbons, notebook paper, pens, and other supplies. Much of the business still relied on printing note cards, letterhead, and other materials for clients throughout Rogers. The printing was done on updated antique printing presses from the old newspaper operation, as well as newer machines. Each printing used many wooden or metal printing blocks to provide the client's logo or

signature to the address or tag line. Due to the demand for any shape or size of print job the back area was full of cabinets and drawers of several type fonts, logos, decorative shapes, numbers, and other blocks allowing Shofner to print just about anything needed by a client. While printing using individual blocks, and hand inking the blocks and feeding the paper is a labor intensive process it has come a long way.



Before the invention of the printing press, copies of manuscripts, books and leaflets were hand copied and embellished with decorations by highly skilled workers. In the 1450's Johann Gutenberg invented the printing press. This machine allowed for the mass printing of manuscripts and other works on paper. Using wooden blocks with fully etched designs or blocks of individual letters a press operator could print several copies of a leaflet or book in only a few hours or days instead of weeks or months. This invention also made the material more readily available to everyone as they become more affordable.

While the first material printed using a printing press was a version of the Bible, the newspaper wasn't left behind. The newspaper as a means of local or far off news began with handwritten accounts of wars or travel encounters carried by hand and read by fellow travelers. By the 1400s in Germany printed versions of these papers could be found. In 1666 the London Gazette became the first English newspaper. The idea of printed newspapers came across the ocean with the pioneers and during the

early days of America became invaluable in connecting the colonies and spreading news ideas.