

7-1-2000

# The Cover Design

Thomas D. Walker

*University of Southern Mississippi*

Follow this and additional works at: [http://aquila.usm.edu/fac\\_pubs](http://aquila.usm.edu/fac_pubs)



Part of the [Library and Information Science Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Walker, T. D. (2000). The Cover Design. *Library Quarterly*, 70(3), 380-383.

Available at: [http://aquila.usm.edu/fac\\_pubs/4178](http://aquila.usm.edu/fac_pubs/4178)

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by The Aquila Digital Community. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of The Aquila Digital Community. For more information, please contact [Joshua.Cromwell@usm.edu](mailto:Joshua.Cromwell@usm.edu).



## THE COVER DESIGN

With some publishers it is possible to observe their corporate lives through their publishing marks or devices. One of the truly great American publishers, Appleton (D. Appleton & Company), is such a company. While it did not adopt a mark until it had been in business for more than forty years, its pristine company symbol evolved to reflect subsequent corporate mergers and acquisitions; as the company faded out of independent existence, its device was replaced by that of a parent company.

Daniel Appleton operated a general dry goods store starting in about 1813 in Haverhill, Massachusetts. To reach a larger market, he moved to Boston in 1817 and then to the thriving city of New York, where he set up his shop on Exchange Place, a busy business center. His was a general store with a department for books from Europe, England, and the United States. By 1830, the popularity of this department convinced Appleton to discontinue the dry goods, and he, with the help of his sixteen-year-old son, William Henry, established himself as a retailer, wholesaler, and book jobber. The next year, Appleton issued his first book, *Crumbs from the Master's Table*, a book of Bible verses. In 1835, with only a few years of experience and at the age of twenty-one, William went to England on a book-buying trip, starting a

[*Library Quarterly*, vol. 70, no. 3, pp. 380–383]

© 2000 by The University of Chicago. All rights reserved.

0024–2519/2000/7003–0005\$02.00

long association with publishers and authors in that country. The father and son joined forces more formally in 1838 by declaring a partnership to be called D. Appleton & Company, which stood for many decades as the publisher's official name. In 1845 the company began what was to become a major undertaking: the establishment of a Spanish department, which would take advantage of a large market in South America and became the leading publisher of Spanish-language school books. The partners called on the talent of Edward L. Youmans as a literary advisor and editor. Youmans traveled frequently to Europe and established working relationships with major figures of the day, including Charles Darwin, Herbert Spencer, and Thomas Huxley.

In 1848, Daniel Appleton retired, and his four sons—William Henry, John, Daniel Sidney, and Samuel Francis—formed a partnership to continue. At that time, the retiring founder requested that the name of the company never be changed. The four sons kept the wish, but ultimately the name changed several times to reflect mergers with other publishers. William Worthen Appleton, the son of William Henry and the third generation in the business, was born in 1845. That he maintained an active interest in libraries is demonstrated by his involvement as director and chairman of the library committee of the New York Public Library. For many years he promoted the library's system of circulating branches.

Appleton became known as a medical publisher as early as 1852 when it published John Appleton Swett's *Diseases of the Chest* (known informally as "Swett on the Chest") to accompany the several medical texts it had been distributing from London. Because of its good fortunes, the company built a factory in Brooklyn, New York, in 1853. The next year, the company bought the lavish quarters designed for the Society Library at 346 Broadway in New York and opened a large-scale retail outlet. It was a landmark in book circles from the beginning but was destroyed by fire in 1867. Appleton's most popular book during the century was Noah Webster's "blue-back" speller, which it published starting in 1855. In 1866, at the height of the book's popularity, more than 1.5 million copies were printed. In the period between 1855 and 1890, sales of the work reached an impressive total, even by today's standards: thirty-five million copies.

The firm saw occasional controversy. While all of Charles Darwin's works appeared on the Appleton list, it was *The Origin of Species* (1859) that caused the most stir. The firm received hundreds of critical letters, including one from a prominent clergyman in the country who indicated that Appleton would be punished in this world and in the world to come.

Appleton entered the encyclopedia business with the *American Cyclopaedia*, the first volume of which appeared in 1857; it was accompanied by a yearbook, the *Annual Cyclopaedia*. Both were sold by traveling sales agents; this successful sales method had long been in use in this country for this and other encyclopedias. The *American Cyclopaedia* sold over twenty-four thousand copies from the beginning and sold at a rate of more than twenty thousand annually for many years.

Appleton also published nonscientific works. Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* was issued in 1866, and other works of fiction for adults and for children appeared with great regularity, including Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli's *Lothair* (1870)

and Stephen Crane's *Maggie, A Girl of the Streets* (1896) and *The Little Regiment* (1896). It was Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage* (1895), however, that saw the greatest success. In 1912 Appleton published *The Reef* of Edith Wharton, one of the leading novelists of the period. It was to be the first of several Wharton novels to appear under the Appleton name. The company also brought out memoirs of famous individuals, including that of Sarah Bernhardt in 1907. The firm set its sights on music as well, publishing perhaps the most popular collections of the time, including *Songs the Whole World Sings* and *Piano Pieces the Whole World Plays* (Albert E. Wier, ed., 1915). By 1925 the music department was one of Appleton's strongest.

Following the Civil War, Appleton published many works by major figures in the war, one of the first being a large three-volume military history by Ulysses S. Grant. An unusual effort was made to acquire the memoirs of William T. Sherman even though the general was aware of the reputation of the House of Appleton and was only too ready to agree when approached in 1875. The same year, Appleton arranged with Jefferson Davis to publish his *Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government*, but it was not until 1881—with the help of a senior Appleton editor, Judge Tenney, who went to Davis' home in Mississippi—that the work was completed and published. Despite its large size and imposing price, it sold several thousand copies. Works by Joseph E. Johnston, Robert E. Lee, and many others also made their ways to Appleton's presses during this period.

The company made a name for itself as a publisher of medical reference works, including many beyond the work by Swett mentioned above. In 1888 the company issued the first medical book to be illustrated with photographs of operations in progress (*Aseptic and Antiseptic Surgery* by Arpad G. Gersten). Perhaps the greatest success in this specialty was a textbook by William Osler, a professor of medicine at The Johns Hopkins University Medical School. His *Principles and Practice of Medicine* (1892) became a classic and probably contributed to Osler's appointment as Regius Professor of Medicine at Oxford University, perhaps the most prominent position in the medical world at that time. Osler's work became a staple in the education of physicians in the English-speaking world and is now in its twenty-third edition.

By 1925, Appleton had issued about fifteen thousand different titles and had an active list of about three thousand. It consisted of a trade department, which included fiction, biography, history, travel, literature, sociology, and business. The medical department was its most prominent specialized area of activity and was a world leader for many years. The college department provided materials for schools, colleges, and teachers. The Spanish department was an unusual specialty for a company of Appleton's size but was well established in South American and Mexico as the leading publisher of school books. The music department was one of the largest general music publishers of the period.

In 1933, D. Appleton & Company merged with The Century Company, which had established a reputation in New York for its dictionaries, hymnals, college textbooks, and novels. The new company had seven departments: trade, educational, medical, dictionary, hymnals, music, and Spanish materials. In 1948, in order to broaden its activities, Appleton-Century acquired F. S. Crofts, an educational publisher. After changes in editorship and shifts in the mix of publishing areas,

Appleton-Century-Crofts was taken over by Meredith Publishing Company in 1960 for seven million dollars and became its educational division. Sold in 1973 to Prentice-Hall, which took over its major educational works and works on medicine and nursing, Appleton-Century-Crofts gained some increased visibility and stability but lost some of its individual character. Since the mid-1980s, the division has been known as Appleton & Lange after a merger with the well-known medical text publisher Lange. The new imprint, in turn, was owned by Simon & Schuster, Viacom, and Pearson and was then acquired in late June 1999 by McGraw-Hill. Over the last several decades and various changes in ownership and editorship, Appleton in its many alliances maintained its status as a publisher of medical texts, which will continue under McGraw-Hill. Included in the most recent acquisition are the Appleton & Lange clinical medical titles, the Lange educational series, the medical review series, and various titles in pharmacy, chiropractic, optometry, mortuary science, and allied health.

Appleton did not use a device or other mark until 1869, when it employed an ornate monogram on certain special editions and in *Appletons' Journal*. The company started using the device of an apple tree in the 1890s. At first the tree appeared with a shield with the company initials and a scroll bearing the company logo, *inter folia fructus* (fruit among the leaves), variations of which were used until the mid-1920s. The merger of Appleton and The Century Company in 1933 led to a merger of their marks. That of The Century Company was an open book against a shining sun, encircled by a wreath. The new design included the tree, under which was placed the open book against the shining sun, with the founding dates of both companies on the book's pages, the whole being surrounded by a scroll bearing the Appleton motto mentioned above and the new name of the company: Appleton-Century Co. Variations of this motif were used for the next twelve years. In 1948, after the merger with F. S. Crofts, another "C" was added to a new version of the logo, and variations of this appeared through the 1970s. After Prentice-Hall was acquired by Simon & Schuster, the Appleton device was replaced by Simon & Schuster's well-known sowing figure and has not been used since. As the firm shed its unique personality and its status as one of the most important publishers in the United States between the 1940s and 1980s, it also lost its characteristic symbol. The name of Appleton will continue to be used in at least one medical text series, but it can safely be said that its era as one of the great American publishers has ended.<sup>1</sup>

Thomas D. Walker, *University of Southern Mississippi*

1. For current information regarding the events in the corporate life of Appleton & Lange, the author would like to express his appreciation to Shelley Reinhardt, editor-in-chief of Lange Medical Publications. For more information on the earlier history of the company, see Grant Overton, *Portrait of a Publisher and the First Hundred Years of the House of Appleton, 1825-1925* (New York: Appleton, 1925); Gerard R. Wolfe, *The House of Appleton* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow, 1981).