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A Survey of Nineteenth Century Rhode Island Billheads

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A
Survey of 19th Century
Rhode Island Billheads

Russell J. DeSimone

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This book is published in conjunction with an exhibition of
Rhode Island billheads at the University Library of the University of Rhode Island
in November 2001

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Dedication

For Linda – my wife and friend.

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Acknowledgments

This book has been eight years in the making. It would have been finished sooner but significantly more time was spent in the collecting of than in the writing about billheads. During this time many people have contributed in some way or other to this final outcome, and while it is impossible to credit all who have assisted, certain people should be mentioned.

One person stands out amongst the many who deserve recognition. As friend and mentor, the late Mildred Santilli Longo provided the guidance and encouragement necessary to make this book possible. As bookseller and ephemera dealer, she provided many of the items in my collection, and as fellow collector she loaned from her own collection many of the items illustrated in this book. She will be missed.

Also to be recognized are fellow collector, David Smith, who allowed items from his collection to be used in this publication; and Thomas E. Greene for not only making his collection available for research but for freely adding to my collection, as well.

I especially want to acknowledge William O'Malley, Chairman Department of Technical Services, at the library of the University of Rhode Island. It was he, through his support and hard work, who arranged for an exhibition of Rhode Island billheads at the university's library. Also through his efforts much of the funding for this publication was raised.

Recognition must also go to Jeanie Ribera for her assistance in the design of this book, and to Richard Ficke for his editorial comments.

Finally I want to acknowledge and thank my wife Linda for all the word processing she did on untold iterations of the text, but more so, for her kind words of encouragement during this project.

Introduction

The billhead, the humble record of a business transaction, is often overlooked as an important document of commercial history. From such a record it is possible to gain useful insight into business life of the times. The 19th century saw the billhead evolve from a crudely written scrap of paper into an elaborately printed receipt. Rhode Island billheads, similar to their counterparts in other states, are interesting for a number of reasons. They provide a record of products manufactured, items sold and services rendered. From them, it is possible to trace a business as its name or address changed, or, as is sometimes the case on graphic billheads, alterations to a building's exterior. Sometimes a billhead is the only known evidence of what a razed building looked like. Billheads can tell us what our great grandparents wore and what it cost, or what they ate and the quantity purchased, or what it cost to shoe a horse, bury a relative or buy a tree or just about anything else that one can imagine.

Billheads represent some of the earliest forms of advertising in America. Long before the introduction of advertising and trade cards in the late 19th century or advertisements in periodicals, billheads were making bold advertising statements. Other mediums such as almanacs, business directories and newspapers were also being explored early in the century for advertising purposes, but it was the billhead that best provided opportunities to make unique and individual statements. To the student of advertising art or printing history, billheads reflect changes in style as taste evolved from the simple (yet oftentimes elegant) pre-Civil War typesetting to the ornate style of the late Victorian period. Occasionally these late century billheads show the influence of the Art Nouveau style.

Just what was a billhead? Quite simply it was a receipt of paper about 6" tall by 8" wide that recorded a business transaction. Although size could vary greatly, the top portion included the preprinted name of the seller and space for the buyer's written name. Also included in this portion was the seller's address, terms and conditions of the sale and a dateline. The lower portion provided space for the billhead's preparer to write in the items purchased and their cost. A small number of all billheads used during the 19th century included a graphic. The graphic usually represented a product manufactured or sold by the business or a view of the building from which the business operated.

The word 'billhead', according to *The Random House Dictionary of the English Language* (Random House, 1987) first came into use sometime between 1835 and 1845. Use of other terms like 'bill', 'invoice' or 'receipt' were also in use, yet today in the world of ephemera collecting it is simply referred to as 'billhead'. The actual instrument of the billhead has been in use for at least the last three hundred years.

The following topical discussions will aid the reader in the review of the examples of Rhode Island billheads that are at the back of this book.

Evolution of the billhead

During the 19th century, the early years of 1800-1830 saw the billhead mainly in manuscript form. A printed billhead from this period is truly a rarity. Most business transactions

were on slips of paper - often unevenly cut. Even in the large cities outside the state, such as New York and Boston, a printed billhead was uncommon. Figures 1 and 6 are examples of manuscript billheads. James H. Read was a tailor in Providence, and his 1825 manuscript billhead (Figure 1) is typical of the period. Thirty years later his billhead (Figure 10) was, in keeping with the times, printed. Samuel Cooke, a Little Compton merchant in the village of Adamsville, was still using manuscript billheads (Figure 6) as late as 1844. Presumably this was due to the remoteness of Adamsville from a large commercial center where a print shop could be found.

By the 1830s merchants were beginning to use pre-printed billheads, and surprisingly some actually made use of graphics. In almost all cases the format was somewhat uniform - name of the merchant, address, dateline and space for the name of the buyer and description of the purchase.

The 1840s and 1850s saw a refinement of the billhead over the initial development of the 1830s. Often during this period the color of the paper on which the billhead was printed was light to medium blue or gray. More attention was paid to printing quality and a greater use of graphics. The Providence Steam and Gas Pipe Co., Figure 12, made use of a handsome woodcut of its plant on Eddy Street. This cut was executed by the Providence firm of Thompson and Crosby. Window and door dealer, D.D. Sweet & Co. of Providence made use of nine different type fonts on its billhead (Figure 13).

By mid century, businesses began to use the billhead as an opportunity to promote products and services. The age of advertising had begun. These graphic billheads are most sought after by today's collectors, often because they provide an excellent depiction of life in a bygone era. Figure 19 shows one example of the stoves manufactured by F. Coggeshall of Providence, while Figure 28 shows the 'Leading Cook' stove sold by Mc Auliffe and Bliss, also of Providence. The Wakefield manufacturer of carriages, S.C. Armstrong, Figure 25, used a stock woodcut on his billhead, while Cairns & Williams, a Providence manufacturer of harnesses, Figure 44, used a horse in harness on theirs. The greengrocers Clapp and King, Figure 31, showed a compote of fruit on their billhead from the 1870s, while the Providence florist, W.S. Hogg, Figure 33, used potted plants on his billhead also from the 1870s. The Newport furniture dealers J.L. and G.A. Hazard, Figure 35, used a Victorian parlor set on their billhead and Bristol fishmonger, C.F. Gladding, Figure 62, used a lobster printed in bright red ink on his billhead. Even undertakers used the billhead to promote their services as was the case with Briggs Brothers, Figure 34.

By the 1890s, some billhead designs began to appear that can be considered modern by today's standards - i.e., fewer type styles, more streamlined type faces and the absence of a graphic. Also it was during this same time frame that some billheads began to exhibit the modern look of the 1890s - that of Art Nouveau.

With the advent of the 20th century, the billhead lost much of its need to be graphic or 'eye catching'. The billheads of the 20th century soon developed into very streamline and business like forms. The art form of the billhead phased out with the 19th century.

Billhead Typography

Billhead design is unusual in that it makes use of a variety of typefaces, graphics and

ornamentation in a small space. Unlike book typography, billhead typography, especially in the latter part of the 19th century, is complex and often fanciful.

The billhead design, usually the responsibility of the printer, needed to accommodate the name of the business, its address, dateline, space for the purchaser's name, terms and conditions, disclaimers, and of course space for the items purchased. This format worked quite well, albeit in the early part of the century billhead design was very plain (Figures 2 and 4). However as the century progressed the use of graphics and ornamentation increased, often times multiple typefaces were use, for example the billhead of J.L. & G.A. Hazard (Figure 35) makes use of nine different typefaces.

The use of advertising windows (Figures 3, 9, 12, 14 and 15) allowed for additional information about a business to be provided without interfering with the rest of the information on the billhead. These windows had decorative borders supplied from the printer's stock that added to the overall visual appeal of the billhead. The window made use of smaller type size than the rest of the billhead in order to cram in as much information as possible, sometimes using a graphic as well as text.

Datelines

Most billheads usually had a printed space to accommodate the dateline with the month, day, and the last one or two digits of the year left blank to be filled in by the billhead's preparer. When at the end of a decade there was still a supply of unused billheads, the preparer merely crossed out the old year on the printed dateline and wrote in the new year.

Of notable exception to the use of the standard dateline were Quaker owned businesses that referred to days and months by number rather than name. The billhead in Figure 7 for hardware dealer J. Congdon & Son shows a standard dateline filled out Quaker style while the billhead in Figure 32 for Congdon, Carpenter & Co. has a specially printed dateline formatted after the Quaker fashion.

Terms, Conditions and Disclaimers

Often billheads contained the terms and conditions for payment. Usually the terms were "cash" or "net cash" or "strictly net cash", although some were "cash-payable within 30 days." In other instances discounts were given for prompt payment. Fidler Bros. and Fessenden (not pictured) offered 10 days less 6%, 30 days less 5%. Furniture dealer Flint & Co.'s billhead (not pictured) notified customers that "goods sold for cash only conditionally delivered until paid for", while hardware dealer Geo. E. Weaver (not pictured) informed customers that "accounts not settled within 30 days from the time they become due will be charged 1% per month interest for all time overdue." Yet on other billheads where the terms were not preprinted, the preparer would fill in the conditions of the sale; frequently this space was left blank.

In some instances it was necessary for the billhead to carry a disclaimer. This usually notified the recipient of conditions for returning merchandise or other conditions such as breakage or spoilage. S.P. Doane, fishmonger (Figure 43) notified his customers that "all claims for deduction must be made within three days after receipt of goods", while drug and chemical dealer, William B. Blanding, Figure 46, informed customers that "Our responsibility ceases after shipping" and "claims for allowance must be made within five days."

Providence produce dealer Frank P. Ventrone informed his customers that cut cheese was not returnable (Figure 65). Pawtucket grocer H.M. Greene (not pictured) warned “Pay for what you get, and see that you get what you pay for,” and as to be expected the china and crockery firm of Warren & Wood (not pictured) notified its’ clientele that there would be “no allowance for breakage.” These notifications, similar to today, were of a smaller type than the rest of the billhead’s type and were set at the top or bottom of the billhead’s printed section so as not to interfere with the overall effect of the document’s design.

Graphics

The majority of 19th century billheads were printed without any graphic or other embellishment. The use of a graphic appeared on only a small portion of billheads and generally fell into three categories - products, services and views. Graphics were primarily made from woodcuts, but metal engravings were also used. Woodcuts came from printer’s stock or were occasionally custom made. The leading Rhode Island wood engravers at mid century were J.C. Thompson Jr. and W.S. Hoyt, both of Providence. Some of the billheads shown at the back of this book were made and signed by these engravers.

Graphics of products and services were used early in the century. Products most often shown were stoves, ranges and furniture. Graphics depicting services were used as well, often making use of stock woodcuts from a printer’s inventory. Services most often shown were those of coal dealers, blacksmiths and undertakers.

Also popular on 19th century billheads was the depiction of a business’ premise. Usually these views were somewhat out of scale, giving the impression of a more substantial establishment than reality would warrant. Use of these views appear on billheads from the 1850s to the end of the century. Figures 11 and 13 show the firms of L.D. Anthony & Co. as it looked in 1856 and D. D. Sweet & Co. in 1858, respectively, while Figures 15 and 16 show the premises of Potter & Champlin of Westerly and William Barstow & Co. of Providence during the 1860s. During the 1880s Providence retailers and wholesalers used different views of their building on Westminster and Weybosset Streets. Through the diminution of the street traffic on the billhead graphic the buildings appeared more impressive than they were, (Figures 45 through 48).

Printer and publisher J.A. & R.A. Reed (Figure 48) not only pictured its building on Custom House Street in Providence but it also listed some of the titles and prices of books it had published. In the 1890s the billhead for Newell Coal and Lumber shows a wonderful view of its buildings on the Pawtucket waterfront Figure 63.

Manufacturing businesses also used the billhead as an opportunity to show off their factories. The Rumford Chemical Works (Figure 42) was so prosperous that it showed three factories (Rumford, Clyde and Riverside) on one billhead. The billheads in Figures 69 and 73 show two factories, one in Providence the other in Pawtucket just as the century closed out in 1900.

Even resort areas and their hotels were issuing billheads with graphics. By virtue of its location by the sea, Rhode Island has always been a vacation destination. By mid 19th century Newport was especially frequented by vacationers from the South looking to escape the summer heat for the healthier and cooler climate of Rhode Island. After the Civil War and throughout the remainder of the century, Rhode Island’s large resort hotels were the preferred place for

vacationers from the North. Expansive wooden hotels began to appear in Newport, Narragansett Pier, Watch Hill and Block Island. While these hotels were numerous, surprisingly few billheads from these resorts survive. Figure 18 proudly shows an exterior view of Ocean House, Newport's premier hotel, located on fashionable Bellevue Avenue. Sadly, this hotel burned in September 1898 and was not rebuilt.

Surprisingly few billheads make use of patriotic motifs. A review of hundreds of billheads throughout the course of the century, turn up an occasional American flag or an image of national patriotism such as Columbia, but in the main any display of patriotism is lacking. One might reasonably expect that during the periods of the Civil War and Spanish American War there would be a greater display of patriotic fervor, but such was not the case. If there is any indication of war time efforts it was usually accomplished with the revenue stamp. A few U.S. billheads do note in the terms of sale that all transactions are to be cash until the end of hostilities. However, none as yet have been found for Rhode Island. It may be expecting too much for war time billheads to display any patriotic motifs when one considers that billheads were printed well in advance of their use.

Revenue Stamps

During the 1860s a law was enacted that required US Revenue Stamps be used on specified instruments and articles such as bank checks, express services and playing cards - this law included billheads. The revenue that these tax stamps raised was intended to pay for the cost of the Civil War. The usage of tax stamps on billheads continued into the early 1870s. The stamp initially used was the two cent orange color internal revenue stamp which had as its design the head of George Washington in an oval border, perforated on all four sides. After a law change in December 1862 it was possible to use revenue stamps for other than their original intent, therefore some billheads can be found with revenue stamps intended to be used on bank checks. The billhead of McAuliffe & Bliss (Figure 28) shows an example of a revenue stamp. Once a transaction was completed, the billhead's preparer would affix a stamp and cancel it either by using a hand stamp or by simple writing on it. Most cancellations included the name of the company and the date of the transaction although others are just crossed out. Oddly, most R.I. billheads from this period are without stamps while billheads from other states are normally found with a revenue stamp affixed. It could be that most merchants simply ignored the tax laws of the day - certainly not without precedent in Rhode Island!

Introduction of the Telephone

The telephone was patented in 1876 by Alexander Graham Bell and became commercially available two years later. By the early 1880s reference to "telephone" and "telephone connection" began to appear on some Rhode Island billheads. Because the telephone was the exception rather than the rule, it was sufficient just to mention that the business had a telephone and the operator would connect the caller. By the mid 1890s the use of telephone numbers began to appear on some billheads (Figure 57) although the use of the term "telephone" with no number continued through to the end of the 19th century. At the end of the century it was still unusual to see any reference to a telephone on a billhead, even for large businesses.

Obviously 19th century businesses unlike their 20th century counterparts were not quick to embrace new technology. Maybe it was thought not necessary for conducting business when so few of clients had telephones either.

Content

As much as the printed matter on a billhead is of interest, it is the content of the filled in billhead that is often the most important. From the content it is possible to learn what 19th century Rhode Islanders were buying and selling, what products and services cost, in what quantities purchases were made, and even the hourly labor rate for services rendered.

Individually each billhead can tell a story of 19th century life, however when a whole collection of billheads from one family or business is available it is possible to get the most accurate picture of daily life. From a family collection of billheads one can tell how often buyers made purchases, what their preferences were and where they shopped. A business collection of billheads provides insight into what materials were required to run a business or how often wood or coal was delivered.

Products and Services

By far, the greatest number of billheads issued during the 19th century were from small businesses. These businesses covered the full spectrum of goods and services required by their patrons for living during this time frame.

Grocery stores and fish and meat markets provided the staples of life. Examples of their billheads are quite common (Figures 24, 27, 41, 43, 54, 62 and 65). Despite being quite common, they are never the less of great interest for the information they provide about what people of this period consumed, the quantities purchased and the cost of such items.

Hardware dealers provided much the same items that hardware stores of today provide. Figures 2, 3, 13, 17, 20, 22, 60 and 72 offer examples of typical hardware purchases throughout the century.

Dry and fancy goods dealers' billheads tended to use graphics of their storefronts rather than actual products (Figures 45, 47, 61, 64 and 70). Possibly this was due to two facts, first fashion (then as now) changed often and printed billhead stock stood a better chance of staying current if a building were pictured rather than last year's styles. Second, stores carried many products and the cost of multiple cuts depicting the day's fashion would be costly to produce. However examples of dry good dealer's billheads do exist that show the day's fashion - but they are the exception, not the rule.

Change in styles can be seen on the billhead graphics of furniture dealers Westcott & Morse (Figure 5), Truman & Tyler (Figure 8) and J.L. & G.A. Hazard (Figure 35). A review of these shows the evolution of taste in home furnishings ranging from the neo-classic style of the 1840s to the Victorian of the 1870s.

The blacksmith was essential to daily life for all of the century. Billhead graphics from this trade were all fairly similar, using a stock cut of the smitty shoeing a horse as in the case of Pascoag's blacksmith James A. Polk (Figure 36). Coal dealers were another essential business of the time. The billhead (Figure 27) for Bristol coal dealers Cole and Paull is unusual, they were

not only coal dealers but grocers as well. Their billhead used two stock cuts, one of a grocer's delivery wagon the other of a coal wagon. Figure 63 shows the coal and lumber yard of Newell Coal and Lumber Co. This type of yard lined the waterfronts of the Seekonk and Providence rivers. The billhead depicted in Figure 67 is unique since it was specifically made for Wickford coal dealer George Steere.

Not to be overlooked is the final necessity of life - that of the undertaker. Figure 34 is a classic example of a 19th century undertaker's billhead. It makes use of a cut of a plumed horse drawn hearse which was quite common on billheads from this period. Figure 25 is that of a Wakefield carriage manufacturer who also doubled as an undertaker. It was not uncommon in small towns for the undertaker to also be employed in some other form of business. Funeral director, C.O. Chase, Figure 74, used a most unusual graphic on his billhead. It is that of the newly built state house on Smith Hill in Providence.

Ethnic Billheads

During the last quarter of the 19th century a large number of immigrants from southern and eastern Europe came to Rhode Island. Few of these immigrants were financially able to set themselves up in business. One such business was owned by the Italian immigrant Frank Ventrone, a prosperous importer and wholesale dealer in Italian products (Figure 65). Nineteenth century billheads representative of ethnic owned businesses are scarce.

A Survey of Billheads

In the pages that follow the reader will find a selection of some of the more interesting and largely graphic billheads from 19th century Rhode Island. It should be noted that graphic billheads account for only a small portion of all billheads and that the vast majority were plain and un-noteworthy. A careful examination of each of these ephemeral artifacts should provide the reader with insight into 19th century life in Rhode Island. For ease of review and comparison the figures following are in ascending chronological order by date of use.

- Figure 1. The majority of billheads issued during the first quarter of the 19th century were handwritten. Providence tailor James H. Read's billhead is typical of billheads from this period. In business for many years, his billhead evolved from manuscript to printed form. Figure 10 shows another of Read's billhead issued thirty years later in 1855.
- Figure 2. This plainly printed billhead from the 1820s was for the Fox Point Union Company lumber yard. By 1831 when this billhead was used the name and ownership of the company had changed to Asa and Johnathan Pike.
- Figure 3. J. Childs & Co. sold woodenware. This billhead is unusual in that it makes use of a graphic which was uncommon for Rhode Island billheads of the 1830s.
- Figure 4. Providence has been a jewelry center for a long time. During the 1830s the firm of Church & Metcalf was in the heart of this center located around Steeple Street and North and South Main Streets. This billhead from the 1830s is typical of billheads from the early printed period, neither manuscript nor elaborate in design.
- Figure 5. The Providence firm of Westcott & Morse used a number of different furniture graphics on its billheads during the 1840s. This one is typical. Note that a straw mattress could be bought for \$4.25.
- Figure 6. Little Compton dealer, Samuel Cooke, was still using handwritten billheads in 1844. Conceivably this was due to the fact that there was no ready access to a print shop in Adamsville.
- Figure 7. Pictured on this billhead is a fancy parlor stove. Many of the graphic billheads from this period depicted stoves. This billhead's dateline is in the Quaker style.
- Figure 8. This billhead shows a sofa that converts into a bed. Obviously the sofa bed is not a modern invention.
- Figure 9. Bookseller and stationer, Gladding & Brother, made use of the advertising window to list some of its items in stock. Possibly the firm printed its own billheads.
- Figure 10. James H. Read's billhead had evolved significantly from the one shown in Figure 1. The billhead shown in this figure is typical in style and format of billheads from the 1850s.

- Figure 11. By the 1850s some businesses had special woodcuts made to show the buildings from which they operated. The view on this billhead is of the firm of L.D. Anthony & Co. which was located in the Dyer building on Westminster Street. This location is now occupied by the Fleet building.
- Figure 12. This magnificently printed billhead shows the Eddy Street premises of the Providence Steam and Gas Pipe Co. The wood engraving was made by the Providence engraving firm of Thompson and Crosby.
- Figure 13. David Sweet & Co. was a manufacturer of windows and blinds. From the unsigned woodcut on his billhead one gains a glimpse of his business on Canal Street in Providence. Also seen are the signboards for S.D. Olney-glazier and Buffington & Hall, wholesale and retail grocer, as well as the spire of the First Baptist Church on South Main Street.
- Figure 14. Silas Moore was the proprietor of the Eagle Nursery located in the Elmwood section of Cranston. This receipt is made out to Joseph Macomber, a Portsmouth, RI seed grower. Moore used the bottom portion of the billhead to add a note requesting Macomber to pay quickly as he (Moore) was “crowded almost to death for money” and owed his bank twelve hundred dollars in less than a week.
- Figure 15. In 1850 Joseph H. Potter went into the drug business. By 1855 E.G. Champlin was admitted as a partner and a store was built on Main Street in Westerly. In its time it was said to be the most complete store of its kind in the country and its representatives went throughout the United States to supply country stores. Interestingly this billhead was used on Christmas day 1860.
- Figure 16. The view shown on this billhead is that of the storefront for Providence carpet dealer, William Barstow & Co. This store at 91 Westminster Street stood immediately to the left of L.D. Anthony’s store at 89 Westminster Street, shown in Figure 11. Since both stores ran in length from Westminster Street to Exchange Place they each provided addresses for either street entrance. The woodcut for this billhead was executed by Thompson.
- Figure 17. Woonsocket dealer Amasa S. Arnold specialized in hardware, cutlery and stoves. According to the business directories of the period he also sold farm equipment. The stove shown on this billhead is a Steward, the name is barely visible on the pot atop the stove.
- Figure 18. Foremost of Newport’s resort hotels was Ocean House. Located on fashionable Bellevue Avenue. This billhead shows the second Ocean House, which was built shortly after the first Ocean House burned in 1845. This hotel would suffer the same fate as the first, destroyed by fire in September 1898.

- Figure 19. This 1865 ornate billhead of stove manufacturer and dealer Freeborn Coggeshall is interesting for the detailed view it provides of Carpenter's Double Oven Range. This range was manufactured in Boston and from the woodcut it appears quite ornate. The woodcut is signed at the lower left.
- Figure 20. John H. Eddy & Co. proudly showed its store front located on Exchange Street. This was the Exchange Bank building and spanned the length of the block from Westminster Street to Exchange Place. The building housed a number of other shops as well. The engraving on this billhead was executed by John C. Thompson of Providence.
- Figure 21. John Mason founded his business as a pattern and model maker in Providence in 1842. By 1867, the year of this billhead, there were seven other Providence businesses providing the same services. This bill is for the making of shafting and gears on a model for the Union Screw Co. The handsome woodcut was made and signed by Providence wood engraver, William S. Hoyt.
- Figure 22. The hardware firm of William W. Arnold & Son was located on High Street. In 1893 this street changed names when it was made an extension of Westminster Street. The engraving of Arnold's storefront is signed by the Providence firm of Thompson and Crosby.
- Figure 23. Probably the most recognized image of the founding of Providence is the one used on this billhead showing the landing of Roger Williams as he is met by the natives. This image seems appropriate for a firm doing business as the Roger Williams Flour Mill. The image was supplied by Gladding Bros. and Co. whose own billhead can be seen in Figure 9.
- Figure 24. Thomas Tilley of East Greenwich was a purveyor of meats and groceries. What makes this billhead interesting is its size, 13 3/4 inches in length. It itemizes purchases made from July 27th, 1868 through January 4th, 1869 when the bill was finally settled. The woodcut is from printers stock and is also known to appear on billheads from Massachusetts and Ohio.
- Figure 25. The manufacturing of carriages came to Wakefield in 1861 when N.C. Armstrong opened a small shop. This business was sold three years later to Stephen C. and William K. Armstrong. In addition to carriage manufacturing, Mr. Armstrong also found time to be an undertaker.

- Figure 26. Seneca Rathbun ran a saw mill in Wyoming, RI. The business directories from this period list a number of saw mills and lumber manufacturers operating in Hopkinton, not surprising given the available woods and power from the Wood River to run the water driven saws. The woodcut used here is likely from printer's stock.
- Figure 27. This billhead is for the grocery firm of Cole & Paull of Bristol. Given that Nathan Cole's name has been crossed out, he most likely dropped out of the business and Seth Paull continued the business using the on-hand supply of billheads. The cuts on this billhead are from standard printers stock.
- Figure 28. Aside from the fine cut of the Leading Cook stove engraved by Thompson and the use of a revenue stamp, this McAuliffe and Bliss billhead is of interest because it is possible to compute the hourly labor rate for work performed. The hourly rate was 40 cents per hour. Also of interest is the use of the revenue stamp to pay for the costs of the recent Civil War.
- Figure 29. B.A. Whitcomb was a manufacturer and dealer in hats, caps and umbrellas in Providence. This billhead has a wonderful woodcut of a Victorian hat rack with various hats, caps, walking sticks and umbrellas. At the top of the billhead Whitcomb claims to be the only jobbing house of its type in the state. Note also the reference to Buffalo robes, a popular item in its day.
- Figure 30. Albert F. Allen was a leading manufacturer and dealer of fire fighting equipment. The woodcut on this billhead shows related gear and tools - helmets, ladders, pikes, pickaxes, hooks, lanterns and trumpets. Allen appears to have been very innovative judging from the number of patents listed in his name.
- Figure 31. Clapp & King sold not only fruits, preserves and fireworks but also Whitman's confections (the same confectioner is still in business today producing Whitman's chocolate).
- Figure 32. The firm of Congdon, Carpenter & Co. founded in 1790, was located at the corner of Canal and Elizabeth streets in Providence. The dateline for this billhead is in the Quaker style. The company continues in business today.
- Figure 33. The florist, W.S. Hogg, selected a simple graphic of pots, plants and trellises (which is misspelled as 'trillises in the text of the billhead) to illustrate his business. This billhead is made out to Mrs. Green of 14 John St., presumably this was the mother of Senator Theodore Francis Green who would live all his life at this address.

- Figure 34. Briggs Brothers, undertakers, used a rather standard engraving of a plumed hearse to represent their business. The bill is for \$4.00 for removing a body to the North end of a grave.
- Figure 35. Newport furniture dealers J.L. & G.A. Hazard used a Victorian parlor set on their billhead to convey the nature of their business. The image used here was also used in Hazard's advertisement in the Newport Directory for 1856-7. From this billhead we learn that in 1874 it was possible to repair and reupholster a rocking chair for \$4.47.
- Figure 36. Throughout the nineteenth century the blacksmith played an essential role in daily life. Mr. E.H. Angell visited the blacksmith shop of James A. Polk in Pascoag a total of thirteen times in five months mainly to shoe a horse or set a tire. The cut used on this billhead is a stock cut.
- Figure 37. Rice & Hayward had a large bakery in operation at the corner of Broad and Pearl Streets. According to the 1875 Providence business directory both Fitz James Rice and William S. Hayward lived at 432 Broad Street which was the house on the left in this billhead.
- Figure 38. The purpose of a graphic on a billhead is to send a message. This billhead sends its message simply yet powerfully.
- Figure 39. Pump manufacturer, William Gibson and Son, was located in the village of Phenix in the town of Coventry. Like most businesses in small town America it was not necessary for Gibson and Son to include a street address on its billhead.
- Figure 40. Akerman & Co. was one of the largest blank book manufacturers in Providence in 1879. Its location on Washington Row was demolished in 1916 to make room for the Hospital Trust building. The graphic used on this billhead advertised printed and lithographed billheads as well as checks, notes and drafts as part of the Akerman & Co. line of products.
- Figure 41. This Westerly billhead is interesting for the view it provides of a 19th century butcher shop, certainly a stock cut from the printer's inventory.
- Figure 42. The Rumford Chemical Works was a prosperous business incorporated in 1858 by Professor Eben N. Horsford. This billhead not only lists its numerous products but it shows plant locations in East Providence and West Warwick.

- Figure 43. Other than recording a business transaction, a billhead can serve the purpose of causing a business to stand out from its competitors. This billhead in bright red ink certainly serves that purpose. Fish dealer S. P. Doane was, as one might expect for a fish monger, located on the waterfront opposite Providence's old police station.
- Figure 44. Located in Providence's Hoyle Square, Cairns & Williams were manufacturers and dealers of equipment for horses. This handsome billhead prominently shows some of their products in use.
- Figure 45. Rosenbloom Brother's purchased the business of Providence shoe manufacturer Eben Beane in the 1880s. Rather than print new billheads they simply used the existing supply and stamped their name in red ink above the previous owner's name.
- Figure 46. Wholesale druggist, William B. Blanding's business, stood at the corner of Weybosset Street and Aborn Gangway (now Harkness Street).
- Figure 47. The wholesale dry good firm of Taylor, Symonds & Co. selected a side view of their premises located at the corner of Orange and Weybosset Streets. Perhaps it was thought this view made the business look more prosperous. Like so many other Rhode Island billhead engravings, this engraving was done by Thompson.
- Figure 48. J.A. & R.A. Reed were publishers of many books about Rhode Island history. This billhead is unusual in that it lists recent publications and prices. The Building shown here is the Daniels building.
- Figure 49. Situated on Providence's eastside, the Friends School later changed its name in honor of its benefactor Moses Brown. From this billhead we learn that Joshua Buxham (the father?) was billed for a broken chair in the room of Henry Buxham (the son?). The cost of the chair was assessed at thirteen cents.
- Figure 50. A significant aspect of billheads is that they provide views of buildings, storefronts and factories that are no longer standing. Oftentimes these billheads provide the only extant view. The billhead of manufacturer Robert Plews, established in 1858, gives a fine view of his business' premises opposite the train depot in Central Falls.
- Figure 51. Unlike most billheads that used a left side graphic, the design of this Newport billhead is well balanced with kerosene oil lamps on both left and right sides. The billhead is further enhanced by being printed on yellow paper stock.

- Figure 52. Isaac Chase was a printer in the Arctic section of West Warwick. His billhead informed customers of the other services he provided - bookseller, stationer, newsdealer, fancy goods, toys, violin and banjo strings, sheet music, school books, confectionary, cigars and tobacco. His billhead also provided a view inside a nineteenth century print shop.
- Figure 53. This billhead is printed on lovely salmon colored paper. Because H.O. Pardey was, among other things, a dealer in stoves, a stock cut of a Spicers & Peckham stove is pictured on this billhead.
- Figure 54. Synonymous with the 19th Century tobacco store was the American Indian. This billhead, printed in red, has a woodcut of an Indian sitting among boxes of tobacco and a bound bundle of tobacco leaf at his feet. Wording above and below recommend "Chew and Smoke 'Big Injun' Tobacco." This billhead is also interesting because it is one of the few that had printing of its reverse. In this case it is a listing of products supplied by the firm of Babcock and Brigham.
- Figure 55. William Harris made his fortune by inventing patented changes to the world famous Corliss steam engines. His rise, from a draftsman working for the Corliss Steam Engine Co. to owner of his own factory located at Park and Promenade Streets in Providence was a true Horatio Alger success story. This billhead was printed on a light green paper.
- Figure 56. This billhead provides an excellent view of the yards of the Newell Coal & Lumber Co., along the Seekonk River in Pawtucket. While the view, by virtue of its center position, dominates the billhead, it is the very stylish modern font for the company name that is of special interest.
- Figure 57. Jillson and Folsom were sailmakers located along Providence's waterfront on South Water Street. The flag and sailboat were printed in bright red which made for an attractive billhead. Note the use of a telephone number on their billhead. This practice would come to be more common on billheads as the century closed out.
- Figure 58. John Althan's business was varied- caterer, baker and ice cream manufacturer. The business must have been prosperous as evidenced by its two locations. The cut to the left top of the billhead has the words 'Our creams are made of pure cream'. In 1893 Mr. Althans was selling his pure cream for \$1.35 per gallon.
- Figure 59. This billhead provides a nice streetscape of Exchange Place in Providence as it appeared in the early 1890s. The American Supply Company stood on the site of what today is the Fleet Bank. The riddle of this billhead is why would the town of Cumberland purchase 11 pounds of waste from a company in the general mill supplies business.

- Figure 60. George Weaver's hardware stores issued a large and diverse number of billheads. The whimsical use of a key as a shop sign is well executed by the New York firm of Arthur Bonnell. On this billhead, the originally printed street addresses have been crossed out and a new address overprinted in red ink. This most likely was due to Westminster Street being extended to include High Street when Olneyville was annexed to Providence in 1893.
- Figure 61. A Providence landmark for many years, the Shepard Co. proudly featured its building on this billhead. A careful scrutiny of this billhead shows the famous Shepard clock on the sidewalk. This billhead was for a mail order to a Miss Alrich of Warwick - 2 cents postage was added to the cost of the transaction.
- Figure 62. Fishmonger, C.F. Gladding originally opened for business in Boston but later relocated to a wharf on Bristol's Thames Street. His trade was both wholesale and retail. The lobster pictured on this oblong billhead, along with the type, was printed in bright red.
- Figure 63. In the age of the horse drawn carriage, the use of carriage and harness care products were as important as automotive care products are today. Charles Blanchard, later Blanchard Oil Co., manufactured carriage dressings, harness oils and soaps and axle grease and oils. This billhead is unusual because it makes use of color, it shows a tin of Blanchard's harness oil printed in vivid yellow.
- Figure 64. Founded in 1891, the establishment of J.O. San Souci & Co. was a mainstay of business in Olneyville Square well into the middle of the 20th century. While the billhead states Olneyville R.I. in the dateline and sites its addresses on High Street, Olneyville was ceded from Johnston to Providence and High Street became an extension of Westminster Street.
- Figure 65. Frank P. Ventrone was a successful Providence businessman. An Italian immigrant, he came to the United States in the 1880s and by the 1890s was a leading merchant in the Federal Hill section of Providence. This business played a major role in the macaroni riots in Providence during August and September 1914. 19th century billheads showing the ethnic diversity of Rhode Island are rare.
- Figure 66. Frederick A. Cahoon's billhead proudly notes that his prices are right. A further look at the written entry shows labor was performed at both 40 cents and 12 ½ cents per hour. Riverpoint is a section of West Warwick.

- Figure 67. The billhead of coal and wood dealer, George N. Steere, is interesting in that instead of using the generic coal wagon graphic commonly found on coal dealer's billheads, he used an actual view of his building. Presumably that is Mr. Steere atop the coal wagon. The billhead's appearance is further enhanced by the green ink used to print it.
- Figure 68. Another Providence landmark was the Tilden-Thurber Company founded in 1856 by Henry Tilden and William Thurber. The building shown here at the corner of Westminster and Mathewson Streets is still standing.
- Figure 69. The Phenix Iron Foundry was located at Eddy Street and Elm Street which can be read from the street signs on the building in the foreground. The complex covered two acres of ground and included a foundry with two cupolas. The Providence River is in the background.
- Figure 70. Browning, King & Co. was a manufacturer and national retailer of clothing for men and women. This billhead is interesting because it shows all the company's stores including the Providence store near the upper right corner.
- Figure 71. The Merriam Co was founded in 1890 and specialized in interior decorations including wallpapers, moldings, fresco, panel and ceiling painting and paper hanging. The company was located in the Conrad building which is still standing.
- Figure 72. Paint dealer, Oliver Johnson & Co. was situated on the corner of Exchange Place and Exchange Street. The view shown here is of its building facing Exchange Place, it is the same Exchange Bank building as shown in Figure 20.
- Figure 73. With just thirty days left in the century, the firm of Weatherhead and Thompson use their stationary good for the next decade. It is interesting to compare this billhead, with its fancy printing and elevated view of its Pawtucket factory, with that of the examples of earlier in the century, in manuscript (Figure 1) or simple printing (Figure 2). The billhead had come a long way in just 100 years.
- Figure 74. This billhead is noteworthy because it shows the new Rhode Island State House which was nearing completion in 1900. Note that a complete funeral cost only \$109.

