Sorts from a font of 30-point **Radiated**,
patented by MacKellar, Smiths & Jordan in 1871.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

For their patient retrieval of numerous copies of *The Inland Printer*, among other materials, thanks go to the librarians at Columbia University's Rare Book and Manuscript Library, especially Jane Siegel, Jennifer B. Lee, and Tara Craig. Wayne Furman and David Smith helped provide a quiet home away from home at The New York Public Library. J. Fernando Peña of The Grolier Club Library was very generous with his time. Robert Wagner, curator and master printer, and Nicholas Baute of Bowne & Co. Stationers at the South Street Seaport Museum allowed me to explore their library, try their presses, and photograph their type. Without Stephen Saxe's invaluable help and advice I would not have been able to create a database of MacKellar, Smiths & Jordan typefaces and ornament.

Professor Amy Ogata at the Bard Graduate Center guided early research with advice and encouragement. Many thanks to Marilan Lund, who helped proofread, and Tom McWilliam, who tutored me in photography and Photoshop. My friend Stephanie Miller cheerfully provided transportation and a place to stay in Philadelphia. Thank you to Bill Deere for his boundless, patient support. This work is dedicated to my parents.

DOUBLE PARAGON ORNAMENTED, No. 5.

GLIMMERING

DOUBLE PARAGON SHADED.

MEANDERED

DOUBLE PARAGON ORNAMENTED, No. 7.

SOLID BLOCKS

DOUBLE PARAGON GOTHIC CONDENSED OPEN.

SURROUNDED

FOUR-LINE SMALL PICA ORNAMENTED, No. 1.

FIBRES

CANON ORNAMENTED.

SPILLED

CANON GOTHIC CONDENSED OPEN.

ENCLOSURES

FOUR-LINE PICA GOTHIC ORNAMENTED.

SHADY

FOUR-LINE PICA ORNAMENTED.

PANSIES

FOUR-LINE PICA ORNAMENTED, No. 8.

MIDSHIPS

FOUR-LINE PICA ORNAMENTED, No. 2.

MYSTIFIED

FOUR-LINE PICA ORNAMENTED, No. 10.

ZIGZAG

FOUR-LINE PICA ORNAMENTED, No. 4.

BENDING

FOUR LINE PICA ORNAMENTED, No. 11.

STREAM

FOUR-LINE PICA ORNAMENTED, No. 5.

SWAYING

FOUR-LINE PICA ORNAMENTED, No. 12.

ETCHING

FOR PRICES OF FOUNTS, SEE CLASSIFIED PRICE LIST.

INTRODUCTION

In nineteenth-century America, typefaces helped shape the visual culture of the young, growing country. A boom in publishing and advertising required ever-greater amounts of type in increasingly diverse, expressive styles, and the ability of prosperous American type foundries to meet domestic demand reflected the country's spirited confidence and self-reliance. One of the most successful of America's early type foundries was MacKellar, Smiths & Jordan, a Philadelphia company that eventually held several records in the history of American typeface production. It was the first permanent type foundry, it issued the first catalog of typefaces, it became the largest foundry, it operated longer than any other, and it was the first American foundry to successfully sell its typefaces in Great Britain. MacKellar, Smiths & Jordan was a pioneer business in American economic history and made significant contributions to nineteenth-century graphic design through the design and sale of hundreds of typefaces.

This book describes MacKellar, Smiths & Jordan's leaders, employees, factory, business practices, and products. It also examines the critical evaluation of nineteenth-century typography and how it has affected MacKellar, Smiths & Jordan's legacy. Although the foundry influenced the appearance of printed material in the nineteenth century, it is largely unknown, even to those who are fascinated by the rich complexity of nineteenth-century typefaces and graphic design. As early as the 1890s, influential designers and critics spurned typefaces designed only a few years before, especially ornamented ones. The twentieth-century bias against the elaborate ornamentation of the late Victorian era has overshadowed and even misrepresented the products of nineteenth-century type foundries. As a result, little attention has been paid to nineteenth-century typefaces and type foundries, even while other forms of design from the period — furniture, architecture, and industrial design, for example — have been reconsidered. One of the most respected histories of typefaces, Daniel Berkeley Updike's 1922 book *Printing Types: Their History, Forms, and Use, A Study in Survivals*, pays little attention to what Updike calls the "tide of bad taste" in nineteenth-century type, recording instead the continued use of older typeface designs during the century.[1] No in-depth history devoted to nineteenth-century typefaces in England or America has been published since Englishwoman Nicolete Gray revised her impressive 1937 book *Nineteenth Century Ornamented Typefaces* in 1976 and included an additional chapter on American types written by Ray Nash.[2] American Rob Roy Kelly thoroughly examined nineteenth-century wood type in his *American Wood Type 1828–1900* in 1969, and surveyed metal type from the period.[3] More recent histories that address nineteenth-century type range in tone from dismissive to cautiously respectful.[4]

This book attempts to rehabilitate the reputation of nineteenth-century typography by describing one important type foundry and its products. I show that MacKellar, Smiths & Jordan was led by extremely hard-working, philanthropic men who attempted to meet market demand while idealistically leading typographic taste. While some scholars follow the prevailing bias of modernist design theory and criticize nineteenth-century typography for its moral failings, I argue that the relative amorality of business defuses moral judgments of typeface design and highlights their emotional nature. If MacKellar, Smiths & Jordan failed to adapt to changing typographic tastes in the late nineteenth century, it suffered a business failure, not a moral failure. By describing some of MacKellar, Smiths & Jordan's many typefaces as well as its business practices, owners, and employees, I emphasize the relationship between products, design, and social context, and thus call into question existing simplistic judgments of nineteenth-century typeface design.

MacKellar, Smiths & Jordan invites study because the company left much behind, in the form of catalogs, price lists, newsletters, a self-published history, and the typefaces it sold. I began to examine the company's typefaces and ornaments by organizing them in digital databases. Because typefaces come in a bewildering number and range of styles, they seem almost biological in their subtlety and diversity. Studies of

Opposite: Page of ornamented types from MacKellar, Smiths & Jordan's 1868 specimen catalog, *Specimens of Printing Types, Borders, Cuts, Rules, &c.*

typefaces tend towards classification and issues of provenance, since the first step in understanding them is sorting them. Despite the tendency for their obvious utility to overshadow their expressiveness, typefaces are design, and their history is a kind of design history, a chronological succession of forms set against economic and social backgrounds. Appendices B and C show MacKellar, Smiths & Jordan's original designs for metal typefaces and ornaments, a small part of the hundreds of designs shown in their specimen books. In its early days, the company may have produced some wood typefaces and copied popular designs from the wood type industry, but the appendices show only the foundry's primary products, metal typefaces and ornaments.[5]

Before proceeding I should clarify some issues of nomenclature. First, it is important to distinguish the difference between typefaces and fonts. A typeface is a particular design of letters that can come in a broad range of sizes. Each size is called a font. A small printer in the nineteenth century may have been able to afford only a few fonts, the most useful sizes of a typeface, rather than the entire range of sizes offered. MacKellar, Smiths & Jordan's customers were printers of all sizes, from the United States government, to urban newspapers, to rural "job" printers who may have bought only one or two fonts during their operation. Typefaces were sold by the pound, and there were different schemes for figuring the proportions of characters that might make up one font, but there were always more "a"s and "e"s than any other letter. MacKellar, Smiths & Jordan sold its newspaper and book typefaces in fonts that varied in size from twenty-five to thousands of pounds, depending on the needs of the customer.[6] Typefaces meant for running texts were called body types, newspaper letters, or book letters, and were sold in greater amounts than "jobbing" typefaces, which were usually ornamented "display" typefaces meant more for advertising than books. Many jobbing faces came only in capital letters, and might have had only seventy-five characters in a font, rather than the two hundred and forty or so in a full font of a text type.[7] Because of their responsiveness to fashion, jobbing typefaces offer more of a basis for studying ornament and style than do utilitarian text faces.

Another confusing issue of nomenclature is the name of the company itself, MacKellar, Smiths & Jordan. The firm existed from 1796 to about 1896, but only during part of this time was the company called MacKellar, Smiths & Jordan. When it was founded in Philadelphia in 1796, the business was known as Binny & Ronaldson, named after its founders Archibald Binny (1763–1838) and James Ronaldson (1768–1842). After 1815, James Ronaldson, followed by his brother, Richard Ronaldson, operated the foundry under their own names. In 1833, Lawrence Johnson (1801–1860) bought the business, which was called Johnson & Smith (1833–1843), L. Johnson (1843–1845), and Johnson & Company or L. Johnson & Co. (1845–1867). After Lawrence Johnson died in 1860, the company was additionally known as the Johnson Type Foundry until 1867, when it became MacKellar, Smiths & Jordan (or hyphenated as MacKellar-Smiths & Jordan). In 1885, the company incorporated and officially added Co. to its name. Finally, in 1892, the firm merged with the American Type Founders Company and operated as the largest branch of the conglomerate until the destruction of its Philadelphia factory in 1910.[8] To avoid the tiresome repetition of the company's long name, I will hereafter refer to MacKellar, Smiths & Jordan as MS&J.

My research was conducted in New York, Philadelphia, and Boston. Maps of Philadelphia in the Free Library of Philadelphia and deed transfers related to MS&J in the Philadelphia City Records and Archive provided information on the company's land and factory holdings. Research at the Library Company of Philadelphia, The Historical Society of Pennsylvania, and the Athenaeum of Philadelphia provided a regional context for MS&J's operations. Some of these archives also supplied biographical information that filled out the character of company partner Thomas MacKellar, while his own published collections of poetry helped capture the man's sensibility. Histories of printing, type founding, and nineteenth-century

trade, as well as nineteenth-century trade journals, described technology the company employed, as well as the intense competition that led to the troubled 1892 merger of type foundries. The company's own advertising circular, the *Typographic Advertiser*, held in various libraries, provided a view of the company's marketing efforts. Finally, the collections of Columbia University, the New York Public Library, Harvard University, Bowne & Co. Stationers at the South Street Seaport Museum, and the private collection of Mr. Stephen Saxe provided access to MS&J specimen books, ephemera, and metal type.

A publication by MS&J was another important source of information. Even though MS&J merged with other foundries in 1892, its continued operation as a branch office justified the celebration of the company's one-hundredth anniversary in 1896 with the publication of a *festschrift*, the illustrated book *One Hundred Years, 1796–1896*. The book's self-congratulatory tone compromises its historical value slightly, but is evidence of MS&J's self-image and its pride, especially in its late technical accomplishments. I also emphasize the later years of the firm, 1867–1892, when it was known by the name MacKellar, Smiths & Jordan and when its typeface production was prolific, but I provide details on the beginning and end of the company as well. A chronology of MS&J's entire existence, which consolidates information from *One Hundred Years*, deed records, maps, manuscripts, and other sources, is provided in Appendix A.

TWO-LINE NONPAREIL GOTHIC TUSCAN OPEN.

ROMANTIC MAIDEN'S FONDEST AMBITION

GREAT PRIMER GOTHIC TUSCAN OPEN.

SPRING MOUNTAIN RILLS

TWO-LINE PICA GOTHIC TUSCAN OPEN.

CREEPING CREEKS

TWO-LINE GREAT PRIMER GOTHIC TUSCAN OPEN.

SUNNY MARCE

FOUR-LINE PICA GOTHIC TUSCAN OPEN.

WINDING RAILROADS

SIX-LINE PICA GOTHIC CONDENSED OPEN.

CIRCUMLOCUTION

DOUBLE PARAGON BOLDFACE EXTENDED.

GRIM Dwarf

TWO-LINE NONPAREIL ORNAMENTED, No. 20.

FERRUGINOUS SANDSTONE

TWO-LINE BREVIER ORNAMENTED, No. 9.

LIMESTONE MOUNTAINS

TWO-LINE PICA ORNAMENTED, No. 21.

OVERSTEALING

TWO-LINE GREAT PRIMER ORNAMENTED, No. 15.

LIGHTNING

FOUR-LINE PICA ORNAMENTED, No. 13.

QUADRANGULAR

SIX-LINE PICA EXTRA CONDENSED.

SLENDERSHANKED

EIGHT-LINE PICA EXTRA CONDENSED.

MONSTERS