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978-0-521-45469-8 - American Literary Publishing in the Mid-Nineteenth
Century: The Business of Ticknor and Fields

Michael Winship

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This is a study of some of the central questions in literary publishing in mid-nineteenth-century North America and Britain, addressed through examination of the unusually rich archive of a unique publishing firm. Boston-based Ticknor and Fields, one of the preeminent literary publishers of its time, enjoyed close links with Britain, and also developed new production, distribution, and marketing skills as the settlement of North America pushed ever further west. Michael Winship has studied the firm's business records and publications in detail: he reveals what Ticknor and Fields published, its costs of production, the ways it marketed and distributed its books, and the profits it made. Winship goes on to explore the implications of the firm's work for the book trade in general, and to show how an investigation of Ticknor and Fields enriches our understanding of the literary and cultural history of North America and Britain.

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MICHAEL WINSHIP
UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS
AT AUSTIN



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University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

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It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of
 education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521454698

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First published 1995

First paperback edition 2002

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data

Winship, Michael.

American literary publishing in the mid-nineteenth century: the business
 of Ticknor and Fields / Michael Winship.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0 521 45469 7 (hardback)

1. Ticknor and Fields – History – 19th century.

2. Literature publishing – United States – History – 19th century.

3. Literature publishing – Massachusetts – Boston – History – 19th century.

I. Title.

Z4783.T5W53 1995

070.5'0973–dc20 94-33367 CIP

ISBN 978-0-521-45469-8 Hardback

ISBN 978-0-521-52666-1 Paperback

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NOTE: Dollar figures in the tables have not been adjusted for inflation or deflation, but the following index of consumer and wholesale prices for each year from 1840 to 1859 in terms of 1860 dollars is based on table A-2 in John J. McCusker, "How Much Is That In Real Money?," *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 101 (1991): 327-28.

	Consumer	Wholesale
1840	1.04	0.95
1841	1.05	0.93
1842	0.98	0.81
1843	0.89	0.75
1844	0.90	0.78
1845	0.91	0.82
1846	0.92	0.83
1847	0.99	0.93
1848	0.95	0.78
1849	0.92	0.82
1850	0.94	0.91
1851	0.92	0.87
1852	0.93	0.88
1853	0.93	0.96
1854	1.01	1.03
1855	1.04	1.10
1856	1.02	1.10
1857	1.05	1.19
1858	0.99	0.98
1859	1.00	1.01

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

LIKE THE PUBLICATIONS of Ticknor and Fields, this book is the result of a collaborative effort and has greatly benefited thereby. Although I take sole responsibility for the final result and whatever errors of analysis and infelicities of style it may contain, I would like to recognize those who have contributed to making it better.

The Houghton Mifflin Company generously allowed me access to its archives, which include the business records of Ticknor and Fields, and provided a microfilm of these records. The Houghton Mifflin archives are now part of the collections of the Houghton Library, Harvard College, and the staff of that library were unfailing in their help. The Houghton Mifflin Company and the Houghton Library have both kindly granted permission to quote from unpublished manuscript material in the records of Ticknor and Fields. I especially thank Richard B. Gladstone and Guest Perry of the Houghton Mifflin Company, and Rodney G. Dennis and Elizabeth A. Falsey of the manuscript department of the Houghton Library for their help.

This book grew out of a doctoral thesis that I submitted in 1989 to the Faculty of English Language and Literature at Oxford University. My graduate studies there were made possible in part by financial assistance from the Overseas Research Students Awards Scheme of the British government, an Oxford University bursary, and the Senior Arts Studentship of Pembroke College. Professor E. G. Stanley and Ms. Naomi Van Loo, librarian and deputy librarian of Pembroke College, graciously arranged to provide me with a working space in Oxford.

My research on Ticknor and Fields was further aided in 1988 by a short-term fellowship from the Bibliographical Society of America. I drew on this research for the Ninth Hanes Lecture, which I delivered at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill on 20 September 1988; the honorarium from the Hanes Foundation for that lecture provided additional funds for research and travel during 1988.

William Charvat and Warren S. Tryon pioneered the study of American literary publishing, and all subsequent research – especially on Ticknor and Fields – owes much to their work. I am particularly grateful to the late Professor Tryon, who generously shared with me notes that he had gathered over many years. Roger E. Stoddard has long encouraged my study of American books of

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

the nineteenth century and has taught me much about them. Professor D. F. McKenzie was a continual inspiration, and gave advice and support as I addressed theoretical issues and organized the many details that arose in the course of my research. Mary B. Ettling patiently helped as I struggled to make sense of this material and commented on successive drafts. John William Pye, whose collection of Ticknor and Fields imprints is now part of the Rare Book Department of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, shared his enthusiasm and knowledge. Jill E. Erickson of the Boston Athenaeum provided photocopies of the Ticknor and Fields partnership papers. Georgia B. Barnhill, Lawrence Buell, James N. Green, David D. Hall, Meredith L. McGill, David McKitterick, Jane R. Pomeroy, Michael Turner, and I. R. Willison read all, or parts, of this study and offered many perceptive comments and helpful suggestions. To these and the many other friends, colleagues, and scholars who have assisted and encouraged me, I express heartfelt gratitude.

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REFERENCES AND ABBREVIATIONS

BETWEEN ITS FORMATION in 1832 as Allen & Ticknor and its final merger into Houghton, Osgood & Co. in 1878, the publishing firm of Ticknor and Fields underwent a number of reorganizations and was known by a number of different names. These are described in full in chapter one. In this study I have referred to the firm in general as “Ticknor and Fields” without regard to the various names under which it conducted business, though for the record I have listed below the names which appeared on the title pages of its publications.

The firm’s business archives, now part of the collections of the Houghton Library at Harvard College, are described in chapter two and listed in the bibliography. Shelfmarks for account books and other bound records are given in the bibliography; those for unbound correspondence, contracts, and other loose papers are given as they are cited. The two series of cost books, rough and fair, provide the fullest record of the firm’s publications: Warren S. Tryon and William Charvat’s edition of the first two volumes of the fair cost books (see below under *CBTF*) identifies and gives brief descriptions of the firm’s publications to 1858. Bibliographical information is usually listed under the first cost book entry for each publication, but Tryon and Charvat also provide a list (pp. 445–68) of works published by Ticknor and Fields omitted from the cost books. In appendix B I have continued the list of the firm’s publications through 1859 from the third fair cost book.

References to the firm’s publications are given in the text, either to the first fair cost book entry for each work or, where relevant, to the entry for a specific later printing. Following the practice of Tryon and Charvat, these references are in the form “B173c,” referring to the third entry, “c,” on page 173 of fair cost book B. When reference is made to a specific copy of a publication, location, and shelfmark are given. Location symbols are taken from the *National Union Catalog: Pre-1956 Imprints* (London: Mansell, 1968–81), with the addition of “UK–BL” for the British Library, London, and “UK–O” for the Bodleian Library, Oxford.

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The following abbreviations have been used:

- APC* *American Publishers' Circular and Literary Gazette*. 8 vols. New York: Book Publishers' Association, 1855–62.
- HM* Houghton, Mifflin & Co., or (since 1908) Houghton Mifflin Co., successor firms of Ticknor and Fields.
- HOH* Henry O. Houghton & Co. of the Riverside Press in Cambridge, Massachusetts.
- CBTF* *The Cost Books of Ticknor and Fields and Their Predecessors, 1832–1858*, edited by Warren S. Tryon and William Charvat. New York: Bibliographical Society of America, 1949.
- TF* Ticknor and Fields, and related firms. The names used by the firm on the title page of its publications are listed here for convenience:
- 1832–34 Allen & Ticknor
 1834–43 William D. Ticknor
 1843–49 William D. Ticknor & Co.
 1849–54 Ticknor, Reed & Fields
 1854–68 Ticknor and Fields
 1868–71 Fields, Osgood & Co.
 1871–78 James R. Osgood & Co.