

¶ This is the first review of the Janson book, by Ted Freedman for *The Pacific Printer* in 1954. Ted was a true gentleman of the press with a rich and practical knowledge in the making of books. I'm reminded of the slim book he wrote and printed, *The Nonpareil and the Fly Trap*¹ – the quintessential San Francisco story of “an old platen press and an old restaurant.”

Book Review from *The Pacific Printer* by Ted Freedman

The typeface called Janson has been a popular machine-set type for a decade or two, but this is the first history and display of it in a book.* This book establishes the West Coast as a source of typographic scholarship, and the author takes pains to acknowledge the assistance of California printers and scholars. It fills a gap in the lore of typefaces and is loaded with those endearing graphic appurtenances which make it desirable for the casual student of printing and which leave the typophile, after viewing it, with that certain tight feeling around the chest until he acquires a copy for keeps.

A couple of years before this book was published, Jack Werner Stauffacher, an enthusiast if anything, decided about the Stempel Janson that *this is it*, and proceeded to order several hundred pounds of it, f.o.b. Hamburg. After the type was laid in the cases he began setting a modest giveaway specimen of the type. But as his enthusiasm inspired the above-mentioned Californians, and some of the eminent type experts abroad, the project grew, and probably he had to choose an arbitrary moment to corral its delectable ramifications into a book. It may, however, continue growing outside the book.

The core of *Janson: A Definitive Collection* is the display of the twenty fonts, each complete on a page or on two facing pages. The showings include settings in each of the fonts of various quotations which “reveal,” one may cautiously assume, the personal philosophy of Mr. Stauffacher. The section, in contrast to the balance of the text, is entirely without any embellishment, allowing the character of the type as type to be observed.

The illustrations in the text are interesting and decorative engravings of the period of the first printing of the Janson and/or Dutch Old Face types, and are mainly of typesetting and typefounding, with a Blaew press thrown in. A special section is a pleasant display of blocks of type ornaments which would go well with Janson types. Another special display which should engage the type connoisseur in a long study is that of the machine-set Jansons and related faces. These are shown in single lines of the same copy arranged for easy comparison.

Now, as to the text itself, we become really involved in a complicated matter without Updike to give us the word. The answer to “Who was Janson?” has been worked on by Stanley Morison who sifted the converging streams of type-specimen sheets to get a fairly clear account. A. J. Johnson has also contributed to the solution, and these findings have been noted in this history. But suddenly (and while the book was on the press, in fact) there was discovered another specimen, of one Nicholas Kis, which came to Stauffacher from Budapest through Ovink and Morison and Carter. A reproduction of this sheet, with some account of it and Kis, appears in the text. Other pertinent specimen sheets are also reproduced, so the reader has ample material with which to

make up his mind or get magnificently confused. The odds are, as they usually are in matters of type attribution, that Janson didn't cut Janson.

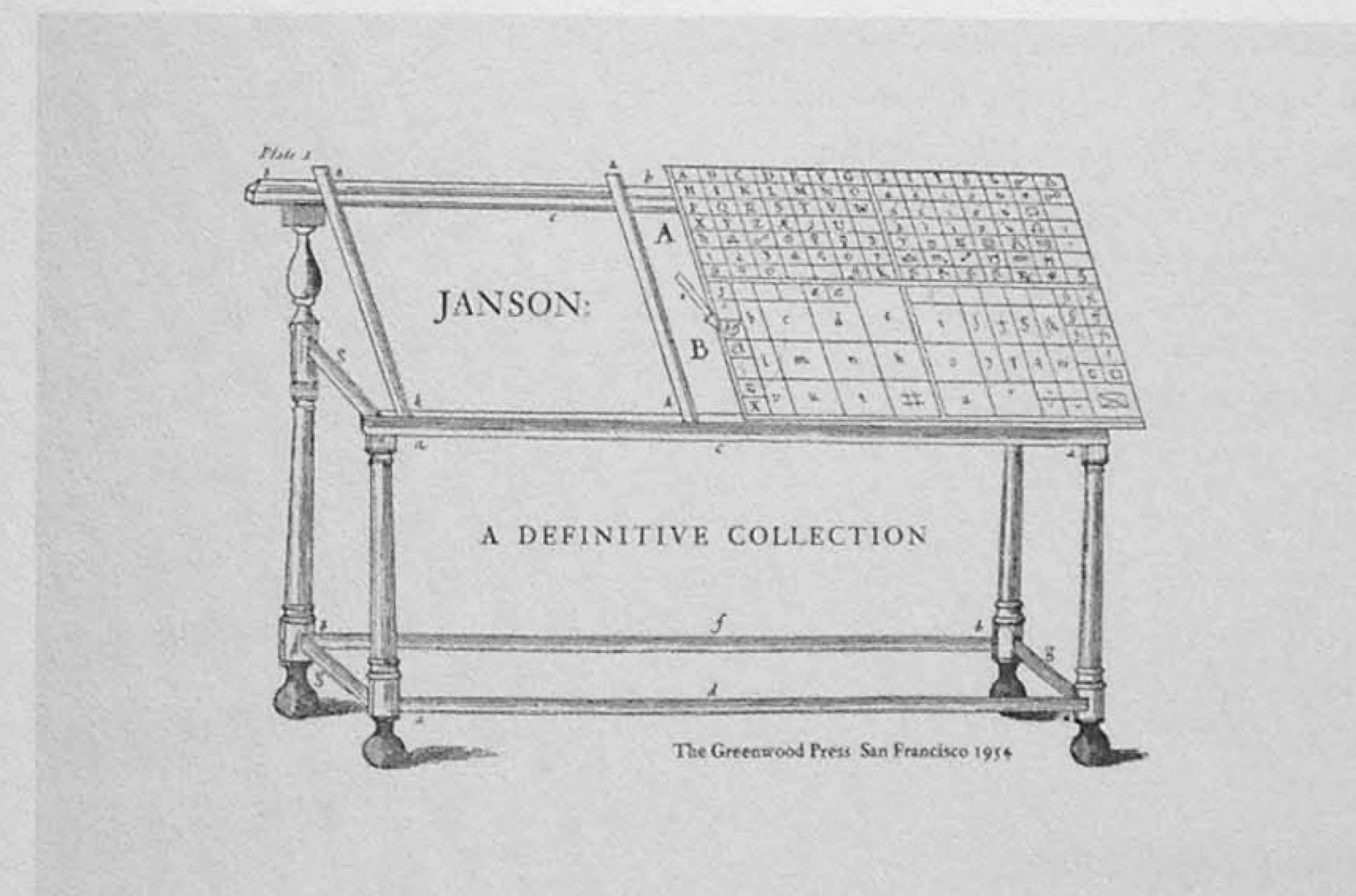
How's the printing? On the esthetic grounds of printing this reviewer usually treads warily, saying, each to his own. In this case he rushes in to say that Stauffacher's typography is vigorous, uninhibited, but not impolite; it has been purified enough that no one, whatever his conditioning, could be disturbed by it. So much for the looks of the printing. The craftsmanship is impeccable. That is a well-worn adjective, but it must be used here. The binding is very durable and works easily. All materials are of excellent quality, especially the heavy text paper which is quite flexible and has a surface that carries the letterpress brilliantly. The presswork is as close to perfect as a human can tolerate, not punchy but black and sharp. The typesetting (all by hand with the exception of two linotype slugs) is thoughtful and well spaced, and appears to be

carefully proof-read (There is one extra eight-point period.) All of the figures are well placed in relation to their mention in the text, and the large folding plates can be examined without changing the normal reading position of the book.

For this whole production, content and presentation, the author-compiler-printer is to be congratulated, and so is this western graphic arts community for fostering it.

*At this point the typophile may well grab for his Updike *Printing Types*, only to find no mention whatever of Janson. However, Updike shows two elegant portions from the Erhardt specimen (the real Janson) which is reproduced in the book under review here, and he did have the Stempel “Janson, acquired 1903,” which seems not as precisely fitted and aligned as it comes today, and which he first used in a book in 1922. TF

1. Ted Freedman, *The Nonpareil and the Fly Trap* (“Published by Gwalchmai of California,” 1951).



2.4 Title page from
*Janson: A Definitive
Collection*, The Green-
wood Press, 1954.