

Hoe (family)

From: The New International Encyclopædia Edition of 1905

[https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_New_International_Encyclop%C3%A6dia/Hoe_\(family\)](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_New_International_Encyclop%C3%A6dia/Hoe_(family))

HOE. The name of a family prominently identified with the manufacture and improvement of the printing-press in America.

— **ROBERT** (1784-1833) was born in Leicestershire, England. He was indentured to a joiner, in 1802 emigrated to the United States, worked for a time at his trade, and subsequently was an associate of his brothers-in-law, Peter and Matthew Smith, in the manufacture of a hand printing-press invented by the former. In 1823 he became sole proprietor of the business. A skillful mechanic, he constructed and introduced the original Hoe press, and was, it is thought, the earliest American machinist to utilize steam as a motive power in his plant.

— **RICHARD MARCH** (1812-86), son of the foregoing. He began the practical study of printing-press manufacture in 1827, and in 1833 became the senior partner of the Hoe firm. He devised numerous ingenious improvements in the presses, and also produced a fine quality of steel saw. In 1841 he, in connection with **his brothers**, Peter Smith Hoe and **Robert Hoe [II]** took over the entire direction of the business. A rotary press, widely known as 'Hoe's lightning press,' was brought out by him in 1846. and forthwith was very extensively adopted for newspaper work. (See [PRINTING](#).) Afterwards he invented the web perfecting press, which superseded his former invention and prints upon both sides of the sheet, and includes complicated apparatus for cutting and folding. (See [PRINTING](#).) Constant improvements were made by him in the output of his works. —

— **ROBERT III** (1839-1909;), a son of Robert Hoe II, succeeded to the headship of the firm, which retains its preëminence among printing-press makers. He was one of the organizers and first president of the Grolier Club, the well-known New York organization for the promotion of book-making as an art. He edited Maberley's *Print Collector* (1880). See [PRINTING](#).

Article on Robert Hoe from Appleton's Cyclopaedia of American Biography, 1887

HOE, Robert, manufacturer, b. in Leicestershire, England, 29 Oct., 1784; d. in Westchester county, N. Y., 4 Jan., 1833. He was apprenticed to a joiner by his father, who was a farmer, but succeeding in purchasing his articles of indenture from his master, came to the United States in 1803. Soon after his arrival in New York he found employment at his trade, and after the invention by his brother-in-law, Peter Smith, of a hand printing-press, was associated with him and his brother, Matthew Smith, in their manufacture. In 1823 he succeeded to the sole control of the business, which rapidly developed with the increased demand for presses and other printing material. The Hoe press was brought out by him, and built from ideas that were obtained from the English flat-bed cylinder presses. He is said to have been the first American machinist to employ steam as a motor for his machinery. Failing health compelled his retirement from business in 1832, and he died during the following year.

His son, **Richard March**, inventor, b. in New York city, 12 Sept., 1812; d. in Florence, Italy, 7 June, 1886, entered his father's workshop at the age of fifteen, became thoroughly familiar with every detail of the business, and was made senior member of the firm in 1833. He showed considerable inventive skill, and kept steady pace with the demands on his establishment for improved and rapid presses. In the style of press that was prevalent when he entered business, the type was placed on a flat bed, inked by a roller that travelled back and forth, and then laid under a cylinder which carried the paper. He soon improved this method by placing the type on a fixed cylinder, and making the impression-cylinders travel around it. Later he placed the type on a revolving cylinder, in contact with which revolved four iron impression-cylinders, each carrying sheets of paper. This rotary press became known as Hoe's "lightning press." At first it consisted of but two cylinders, but their number was increased to four, six, eight, and finally to ten. Subsequently he built a press capable of printing from a long sheet, or web, of paper, and on both sides of the sheet at a single operation. This press is a combination of the most delicate and intricate devices. A roll of paper five miles long is put through the machine at the rate of eight hundred feet a minute. As the sheets come out they are passed over a knife which cuts them apart, and they are then run through an apparatus which folds them for the mail or for carriers. These completely printed and folded newspapers are delivered as quickly as the eye can follow them. He early added the production of steel saws to his business, and the manufacture of these was gradually improved. In 1837 he visited England, and obtained a patent for a better process of grinding saws. He established in New York, in connection with his factory, an apprentice's school, where free instruction was given. Mr. Hoe acquired a large fortune, and at the time of his death was travelling in Europe for his health.

Another son, **Robert [Robert Hoe, Junior a.k.a Robert Hoe II]**, b. in New York city, 19 July, 1815; d. in Tarrytown, N. Y., 13 Sept., 1884, was associated with his father and elder brother in business. He was one of the founders of the National academy of design, and a patron of young artists.

Robert Hoe III, son of the second Robert, b. in New York city, 10 March, 1839, is at present (1887) senior member of the firm, and is also president of the Grolier club, an organization for promoting the arts pertaining to the production of books. He has edited "The Print Collector," by J. Maberley (New York, 1880).

Source: https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Appletons%27_Cyclop%C3%A6dia_of_American_Biography/Hoe,_Robert

ROBERT HOE, 3D, DIES IN LONDON

Head of R. Hoe & Co., Printing
Press Makers, and Inventor
of Printing Devices.

DEVELOPED COLOR PRINTING

And the Old Hoe Cylinder into the
Present Wonderful Press—Col-
lector of Rare Books.

Special Cable to THE NEW YORK TIMES.

LONDON, Sept. 22.—Robert Hoe, head
of R. Hoe & Co., printing press manu-
facturers of New York and London

factories of New York and London, died at his West End residence this morning from kidney trouble resulting from a cold contracted a week ago. No member of the family was present at his death.

Mr. Hoe had been since the Spring in England, where for the last year or two he had been in the habit of spending several months at a time. He was anxious to bring his London works up to the same standard of perfection as his factory on Grand Street, and it was this which caused his long absences from America. He had expected to return here in about six weeks. His son Robert sailed for England on Tuesday as soon as he heard that his father was ill. He will bring the body back for burial here.

Robert Hoe, 3d, was born on March 10, 1839, and was the descendant of two leaders in the development of printing presses. His grandfather, Robert Hoe, came to this country from Leicestershire, England, in 1784, and in 1803 started with his brothers-in-law, Matthew and Peter Smith, a press manufactory. In this Peter Smith was a pioneer, as he invented a hand press which was a distinct advance on any then in use.

Robert Hoe was succeeded by his two sons, Col. Richard M. Hoe and Robert Hoe, 2d. Robert Hoe, 3d, was the son of the latter and succeeded to the management of the firm in 1884.

He had, however, been in the business from the days when he left school, and a large part of the development of the printing press must be traced to him. Mr. Hoe never took out a patent in his own name, but he was in the closest touch with those who were devising new methods of printing, and made suggestions to his craftsmen and mechanics not only as to what advances should be attempted but also of the means by which they should be accomplished.

The strides which have been made in printing under his direction are evidenced by the fact that at the time when he entered the business the cylinder press invented by his uncle, Richard M. Hoe, was still held to be a marvel. It departed for the first time from the original principle of placing the type on a flat surface

and pressing the paper on it by setting the type on a horizontal cylinder, which revolved on its own axis and pressing the sheets against it by external small cylinders.

This invention was known as the "lightning" press, and yet its utmost capacity when Mr. Hoe became connected with the business was on the largest, a six cylinder machine, only 9,000 sheets of four pages each, which had to be folded afterward by separate machinery or by hand. To-day eight rolls of paper can be fed automatically into one press, and 166,000 sixteen-page newspapers may be printed each hour and delivered folded ready for delivery. In this invention the paper is fed to the press from the web or roll of paper and not in sheets. The firm of R. Hoe & Co. in 1871 was one of the earliest to adopt this idea and bring it to perfection.

Mr. Hoe saw, moreover, a number of devices adopted, which made possible the achievement by his machines of far more than the simple printing of a page. Thus printing in four colors has been brought to great efficiency, and his interest in this matter is evidenced by the excellent results that have been obtained by his firm's presses.

Outside of his inventive capacity Mr. Hoe was remarkable for his success as an organizer. He systematized his factory completely and possessed the art of selecting able assistants. He spared no trouble in building up a competent set of mechanics, and in this connection gave much attention to his apprentices' school.

Every boy apprenticed to him was compelled to attend school. One hour of his working time and one hour of his own time were devoted to this purpose, and in order to prevent any difficulty from the supper hour they were provided each night with a luncheon of milk and sandwiches. In this school part of the time was devoted to the continuation of their regular education along the lines of the public schools, and the rest was set apart for technical studies. They were thoroughly trained as skilled mechanics and draftsmen, and some of the leading men in the Hoe works and in the pressrooms of the large newspaper offices of the city received their start in life as apprentices to R. Hoe & Co.

In the New York factory, at the eastern end of Grand Street, Mr. Hoe employed 2,500 men, and it is now the only establishment of anything like its importance on the Island of Manhattan. In London

the firm employs 800 men.

Apart from his business, Mr. Hoe was known as a lover of the fine arts. He was in particular a collector of early and rare books, and his library is looked on as the finest in the United States. When the Gilliss Press issued a few years ago a catalogue of Mr. Hoe's books written by English authors before 1700, the list took up six volumes. Mr. Hoe also paid a great deal of attention to artistic bindings. They were designed specially for him by his own artists, and were worked out by skilled binders. He was the founder and first President of the Grolier Club.

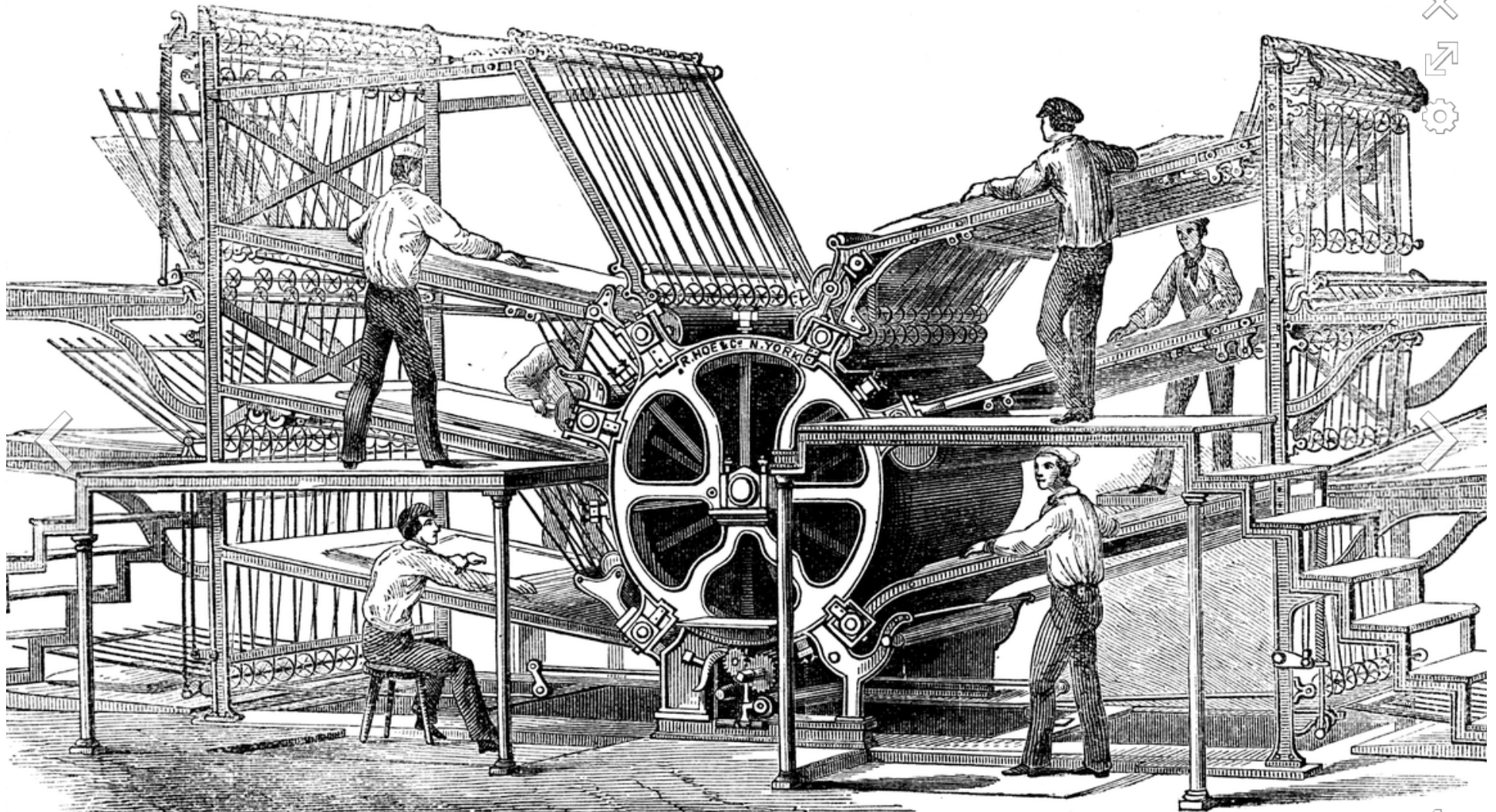
Mr. Hoe wrote several books, including one on bookbinding and another giving a clear account of the evolution of the printing press from the rude hand machine of Gutenberg to the most elaborate of his own house's products. He was one of the founders of the Metropolitan Museum and was a member of the Union League, Century, Players, Fencers', and Engineers' Clubs.

He married Miss Olivia P. James, daughter of Daniel James of New York and Liverpool, who survives him. Of his many children, his two sons, Robert Hoe and Arthur Hoe, who are in the business, and three married daughters, are also living. His town residence was at 11 East Thirty-sixth Street, and he owned a country seat at Lake Waccabuc, N. Y.

The New York Times

Published: September 23, 1909

Copyright © The New York Times



HOE'S SIX CYLINDER PRINTING PRESS.

Hoe's 6-cylinder press, from N. Orr's *History of the Processes of Manufacture* (1864)

[More details](#)