

Book chronicles history of Meriden Gravure and the city print industry



By Leigh Tauss
Record-Journal staff

MERIDEN — The Meriden Gravure was never among the largest or most widely known companies in the city, but during its century-long history it garnered a reputation as one of the highest quality printing companies in the country, producing publications for universities and museums. The company's history and evolution of the printing industry is explained in a new book, "In the Service of Scholarship," by city resident and longtime company employee William J. Glick.

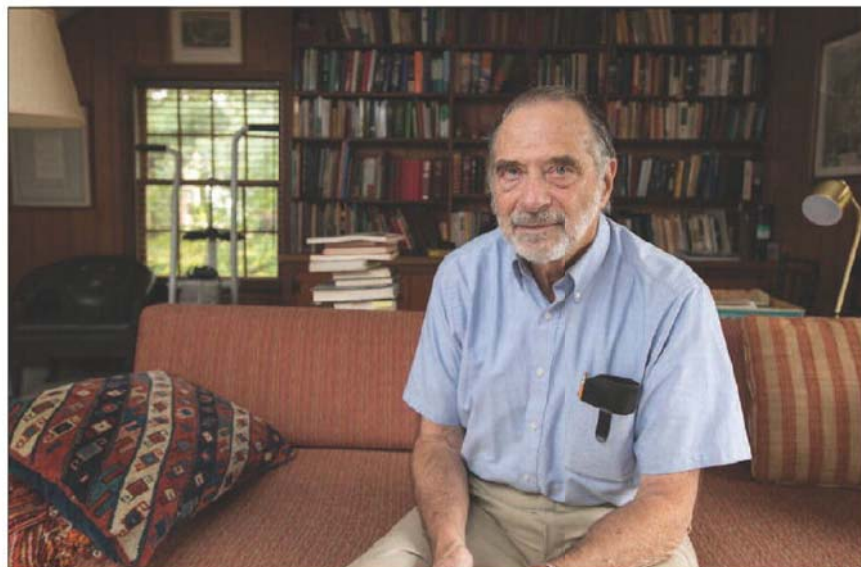
"Our market was the high end of printing. We were the Cadillac of printing," Glick said. "In the printing and publishing world, when you said Meriden you weren't talking about International Silver. You were talking about Meriden Gravure."

The hardcover book was recently published by Oak Knoll Press. Founded in 1888, Meriden Gravure was headquartered at 47 Billard St. The company merged with Vermont printing company Stinehour Press in 1977 and in 1990, Meriden-Stinehour moved operations entirely to Vermont. Glick was first hired by the company in 1961 and moved to Vermont to continue working until his retirement in 2000, when he returned to Meriden.

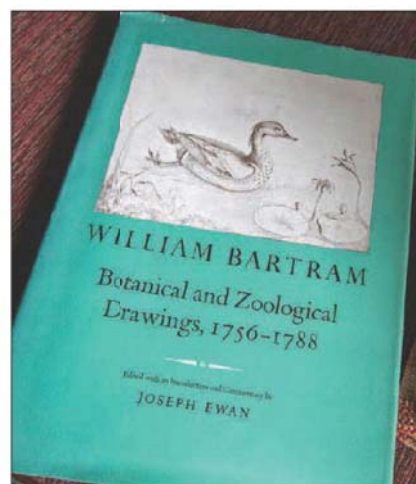
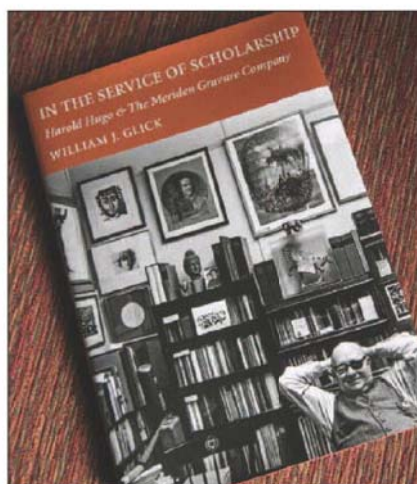
Prior to the dawn of the digital age, photography was used to replicate drawings and art for print in a highly technical process, Glick said. One example of the company's products is a 1968 collection of botanical and zoological drawings from 18th century naturalist William Bartram. Capturing the essence of Bartram's drawings was no simple task, Glick said.

"They would have to be photographed very carefully to accurately preserve the colors," Glick said. "Some of these plants and animals are extinct now and the only things we have available are drawings and things like this."

While the publications were not marketed to the general public, Meriden Gravure became



William J. Glick, of Meriden, author of "In the Service of Scholarship: Harold Hugo & the Meriden Gravure Company," sits for a photo Wednesday. | Photos by Dave Zajac. Record-Journal



Left, "In the Service of Scholarship: Harold Hugo & the Meriden Gravure Company." Right, The book "William Bartram: Botanical and Zoological Drawings, 1756-1788," was printed at the Stinehour Press in Vermont with reproductions printed at the Meriden Gravure.

a renowned brand among universities, museums and other scholarly organizations.

In addition to chronicling the history of Meriden Gravure, Glick's book also serves as a character study of the company's former president Harold Hugo, who Glick regarded as a mentor.

"This is in part a company history, but it is also a biography of the man who made the company what it was," Glick said.

Allen Weathers, curator of the Meriden Historical Society, said the book highlights the city's little-known print industry.

"They were one of the best printers in the country right here in

Meriden," Weathers said. "It was a wonderful company."

Glick will be discussing the book and the history of the company at the Meriden Public Library on Nov. 9.

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