Prang, Louis (1823-1909) Encyclopedia Article

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Prang, Louis (1823-1909)

Founder of one of America's best-known art education publishers and art supply firms, Louis Prang immigrated to Boston, Massachusetts, from Prussia in 1852. Initially a wood engraver, he became a lithographer, making prints to decorate the homes of New England's growing middle class. He also made labels for manufactured goods, campaign maps for families of Civil War soldiers, and America's first Christmas cards.

In 1870 a Massachusetts law mandated art instruction in the public schools to meet a burgeoning demand for commercial artists. Prang and Company seized on this new market with drawing cards for imitation in the classroom, art textbooks, the Prang Solids (geometric forms to be drawn by the student), paints, crayons, and drawing papers. Although the "art labor" movement receded by the turn of the twentieth century, Prang's firm continued to manufacture art supplies into the 1990s as a subsidiary of the American Crayon Company.

Further Reading:

Barnhill, Georgia B., et al., editors. *The Cultivation of Artists in Nineteenth-Century America.* Worcester, American Antiquarian Society, 1997.

Freeman, Larry. *Louis Prang: Color Lithographer.* Watkins Glen, New York, Century House, 1971.

Korzenik, Diana. *Drawn to Art: A Nineteenth-Century American Dream.* Hanover, University Press of New England, 1985.

McClinton, Katharine Morrison. *The Chromolithographs of Louis Prang.* New York, Clarkson and Potter, 1973.