

## Did Ticker Tape Rain on Copyright Office?

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When Copyright Office staffers recently organized deposits stored at the Iron Mountain storage facility in Fredericksburg, Virginia, they came upon boxes of ticker tape. What? Do we mean the scrolling script showing sports scores and temperatures at the bottom of our TVs or computer screens?

No. This is the real thing. The 6-inch-wide rolls of paper were registered by Dow Jones Co. in 1977 and are imprinted with the Dow Jones News Service financial and business news sent to subscribers. Included on a roll from May 3, 1977, is information not only on stock prices on the New York Stock Exchange but also news items, including the price of gold (\$147.50 per ounce) and the sale by Boeing Co. of four 727 aircraft to Braniff for \$49.7 million.

Copyright Office retiree Stevie Withers remembers flattening the first part of the roll to stamp the date of receipt on the deposit. **Hugh Clark**, a team leader in the Performing Arts Division, said that rolls were treated as printed text and registered under the old law in class B as a periodical manufactured in the United States.

Ticker tape came into use with the invention of the stock ticker, a machine that transmitted financial information over telegraph wires to be printed by a typewriter with piano-like keys at the other end. The ticker was named for the sound it made. A variety of machines existed before Thomas Edison patented his “universal stock printer” machine in 1869. He received \$40,000 for the invention, enough to



*Thomas Lawson (1857–1925) sits amid ticker tape in a ca. 1904 photo. He made a fortune in the stock of Amalgamated Copper Mining Company.*

establish his research laboratory in Newark, New Jersey, in 1871.

Beginning with a parade to honor the dedication of the Statue of Liberty in 1886, America’s heroes and significant events have been celebrated with a ticker-tape parade down New York’s skyscraper-lined Broadway, the street also called the Canyon of Heroes. People in the tall buildings toss out ticker tape and confetti on the parade, creating a magical scene of streaming and floating paper. Admiral Dewey, Charles Lindbergh, John Glenn, John F. Kennedy, the Apollo 11 astronauts, and various sports teams have been so honored. The event resulting in the most ticker tape was the celebration of the end of World War II on August 14, 1945, when, according to Time Inc., 3,000 street sweepers cleaned up 5,438 tons of paper.

Now that office building windows no longer open and paper ticker tape has given way to the Internet, the rare ticker-tape parade is showered with confetti. But copyright deposits are a physical reminder not only of past newsworthy financial numbers but also of heroes and joyous occasions that Americans have celebrated. ©

*Ticker tapes were deposited with claims to copyright.*