Emanuel Anthony Posselt

*Author’s Note:* This is a work in progress. I’ve accumulated material on Posselt and his books over time and add to it now and then. Not everything I have is included here, but I decided it was better to publish something than to continue to add and revise.

E. A. (Emanuel Anthony) Posselt published prolifically on topics related to weaving and textile manufacture from 1892 until his death in 1921. His book on the Jacquard machine is considered to be a classic.

**Biographical Information**

The following information is taken from a 1900 biography [1].

Author and textile expert. Born Reichenberg, Austria August 21, 1858. Son of Emanuel Anthony and Elizabeth (Demuth) Posselt.

Graduated in 1876 from the Imperial Government Weaving School of Reichenberg. Next managed his father’s mills in Reichenberg, where he got his first practical experience in textile manufacturing. Visited most important cities in Europe carrying on the manufacture of textiles.

Came to the United States August 14, 1878. From that time until 1884 he was employed as a designer or supervisor in leading mills in the New England States and Pennsylvania.

In 1884 he became the first director of the first successful textile school in the United States, started in Philadelphia in connection with the Pennsylvania Museum and School of Industrial Art. In 1891, he resigned his position and accepted editorship of the *Textile Record of North America*, as of 1900 the foremost journal on textile manufacturing in the United States.

At this time he established a private textile school as well as a book business in textile literature. His first published work was *The Jacquard Machine* (4 editions as of 1900). His next and most important publication was *The Technology of Textile Design* (7 editions as of 1900), followed by *The Structure of Fibres, Yarns and Fabrics*. He also published *Textile Calculations* and *Textile Machinery*. He also published in the United States such valuable works as *Wool Dyeing* by Professor Gardner (written in England).

He was editor for the textile department in Funk & Wagnalls’ *Standard Dictionary* and numerous other works.

His books are the standard authorities in this country on the subjects which they treat, and have equal status in England, where they have been republished.

He is married and has two children.

Care should be taken in interpreting information in published biographies. Biographies about living persons (as Posselt was when the biography above was written) usually are more laudatory than biographies about dead persons. In addition, a biography of a living persons often is based on information provided by that person, which usually is cast in a more favorable way than information compiled from records after a person dies.
Genealogical records on the Web say he married Anna Clera Pollinger on July 2, 1884 in Colchester Vermont, and that they had three children: Anna (1896), Elwood (1906), and Gertrude (1908). Posselt’s date of death is listed as 1921.

**Books**

Posselt published two series of books, *Posselt’s Textile Library*, started in 1892, and *Hand Books of the Textile Industry*, started in 1914. He also authored or co-authored several other books. Bibliographic citations for Posselt’s books are given in Appendix A.

**Posselt’s Textile Library**

Nine volumes were projected for this series, although only seven were published. Posselt wrote five of the seven; the other two on dyeing were authored by others. Dates that actually appear in the books are in boldface. The other dates are educated guesses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>volume</th>
<th>title</th>
<th>author</th>
<th>date</th>
<th>editions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td><em>Textile Calculations</em></td>
<td>Posselt</td>
<td>1892</td>
<td>at least 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td><em>Wool Dyeing, Part 1</em></td>
<td>Gardner¹</td>
<td>1896</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td><em>Textile Machinery (Part I)</em></td>
<td>Posselt</td>
<td>1898</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td><em>The Jacquard Machine</em></td>
<td>Posselt</td>
<td>1887</td>
<td>at least 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI</td>
<td><em>Textile Machinery, Part 2</em></td>
<td>Posselt</td>
<td>1901</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII</td>
<td><em>Wool Dyeing, Part 2</em></td>
<td>Gardner¹ and Knaggs²</td>
<td>1896</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX</td>
<td><em>Textile Machinery, Part 3</em></td>
<td>Posselt</td>
<td>1905</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Hand Books of the Textile Industry**

All the books in the *Hand Books of the Textile Industry* were written by Posselt.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>volume</th>
<th>title</th>
<th>author</th>
<th>date</th>
<th>editions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><em>Dictionary of Weaves, Part I</em>³</td>
<td>Posselt</td>
<td>1914</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td><em>Narrow Woven Fabrics</em></td>
<td>Posselt</td>
<td>1917</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td><em>Silk Throwing</em></td>
<td>Posselt</td>
<td>1918</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td><em>Fabric Analysis</em></td>
<td>Posselt</td>
<td>1920</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹Walter Myers Gardner, 1862 - ?; authored or co-authored several other books on dyeing and the British coal-tar industry.

²A. B. Knaggs; no other books by him are known.

³Introductory notes are in English, German, and French.

March 9, 2002
Other Books
The following books do not contain any indication that they belong to either of the series above.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>title</th>
<th>author</th>
<th>date</th>
<th>editions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Technology of Textile Design</td>
<td>Posselt</td>
<td>1888</td>
<td>at least 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Structure of Fibres, Yarns and Fabrics (2 volumes in 1)</td>
<td>Posselt</td>
<td>1891</td>
<td>at least 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cotton Manufacturing, Part 1</td>
<td>Posselt</td>
<td>1903</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cotton Manufacturing, Part 2</td>
<td>Posselt</td>
<td>1903</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Glossary of Silk Terms</td>
<td>Chittick(^1) and Posselt</td>
<td>1915</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Book Content
Posselt’s books on textile machinery and manufacture now are primarily of historical interest, but his books on weaving are still relevant.

His books are all technical in nature, matter-of-fact, and comprehensive with respect to the situation at the time they were written.

All his books are well illustrated, most especially those on textile machinery, which contain many high-quality engineering drawings. See Appendix B for examples. What few “photographs” there are in the books, however, are of mediocre quality, as is typical of the standard printing technology of the time. There is no color except for a few advertisements.

Most of the book contain many pages of advertising, as is typical of trade books of the time. Some readers will find the advertisements more interesting than the rest of the books.

Advertisements for Posselt’s own books, as well as for his various businesses, are extensive. At least as far as advertising was concerned, Posselt was not burdened with excessive modesty. He described his book The Technology of Textile Design as “the most important book on textile designing ever published”, and he described his other books with similar superlatives.

There are some differences in advertisements in books published in the United States and those published in England.

Publishers
Posselt published his books himself in Philadelphia under the name Posselt and Textile Publishing Company. This was not self-publishing as we now understand it. He established his own press. Some of his books also were published in London by Sampson, Lowe, Marston, & Co.

Projected Books Not Competed
There is no record of what might have been planned for volumes V and VII of Posselt’s Textile Library.

Dictionary of Weaves, Part 2 was advertised for sale in Fabric Analysis (see Figure 1) but no copies have been cited.

\(^1\) James Chittick, 1861 - ?; authored several other books on silk and on textile mills.
Figure 1. Advertisement in *Fabric Analysis*

Since *Fabric Analysis* was published in 1920, a year before Posselt’s death, *Dictionary of Weaves, Part 2* may have been in progress but not completed before he died. In Cotton Manufacturing, Part 1, he says

Subsequent volumes, to be issued regularly hereafter — one each year — will in turn take up:

*Combing, Drawing and Fly Frames;*
*Mule, Ring Frame, Winding, Doubling and Yarn Preparing Machinery;*
*Designing, Weaving and Calculations;*
*Dyeing and Finishing, respectively.*


So, in all at least five planned books were never published.

**Journal**

*Posselt’s Textile Journal* ran from October 1907 through December 1923, Vol. 1 - 33, No. 5. Figure 2 shows an advertisement for the *Journal* that appeared in one of Posselt’s books.
Posselt's Textile Journal was edited by Posselt himself. Posselt's Textile Journal was absorbed by Textile World in 1923, which continues to the present day. Textile World began in 1888 with the title Textile Manufacturing World. Its name varied over time and it absorbed several other journals in the field. See Figure 3.

Figure 3. Posselt's Textile Journal and Related Publications

Posselt's Professional Activities

In addition to the professional activities listed in the 1900 biography at the beginning of this article and his journal, Posselt offered personalized instruction in textile design and specialized design services.
Availability of Posselt’s Publications

All of Posselt’s books are available in the Digital Archives of Weaving Documents:

http://www.cs.arizona.edu/patterns/weaving/books.html

The Complex Weavers Lending Library [2] also has copies of all of Posselt’s books.

Many public and academic libraries have a few of Posselt’s books, but none has all of them as of present OCLC listings [3]. Only 17 libraries have holdings of his textile journal.

Posselt’s books occasionally are found in used bookstores and sometimes show up in online offerings. His book on Jacquards seems to be the most elusive. The price asked for a book varies from less than $50 to several hundreds of dollars, depending on the book, its condition, and the bookseller. Except for the possibility of books not recorded here, Posselt’s books should be considered scare but not rare.

In looking for Posselt’s books, care needs to be taken as to how their titles are listed. Several of his books have long complete titles. This sometimes causes confusion in identifying them, with different sources using different short titles. For example, the long title for Vol. IX of Posselt’s Textile Library is


This book is sometimes cited as Recent Improvements in Textile Machinery, sometimes as Wool, Cotton, Silk, and sometimes in other ways.

Copies of Posselt’s Textile Journal are very hard to find, as is the case with other old textile journals that were not published in durable bindings.

References


2. Complex Weavers Lending Library: http://complex-weavers.org/libintro.htm


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Appendix A — Posselt’s Books

Alphabetical by Short Title

Note: Page count includes pages of advertisements. Page count varies somewhat by edition.


Appendix A — Posselt’s Books

Long Titles

Note: Numbers refer to the short-title list on previous page. Capitalization is as given in the books except when all caps are used.

1. A Glossary of Silk Terms Including a short history of silk; its origin, culture and manufacture.

2. Cotton Manufacturing Part 1. Dealing with the Fibre, Ginning, Mixing, Picking, Scutching and Carding; Giving a Complete Description of the Manufacture of Cotton Yarns from Planting the Seed to the Sliver Ready for Drawing or Combing, Explaining also the Construction of the Most Approved Modern Machinery Used in Connection with it.

3. Cotton Manufacturing Part 2. Combing, Drawing, Roller Covering and Fly Frames; Being a Complete Treatise on Modern Processes and Machinery Used in Connection with these Processes of Cotton Spinning, Giving also all the Calculations Required.


5. Fabric Analysis Covering Wool, Worsted, Silk, Cotton, Artificial Silks, etc. from Fiber to Finished Fabric.


7. Recent Improvements in Textile Machinery Related to Weaving. Giving Descriptive Illustrations of the Construction and Operation of the Most Modern Makes of Looms, Jacquards, Spoolers, Winders, Dressers, etc., etc. Also Illustrating and Explaining the Latest Improvements in Shuttles, Temples, Pickers, Reeds, Heddles, Harnesses, etc., for the use of Manufacturers, Mill Managers, Designers, Overseers, Loom Fixers, Students and Inventors.

8. Recent Improvements in Textile Machinery Relating to Weaving (Part II), Being a continuation of Part I. Giving Descriptive Illustrations of the Construction and Operation of the Most Modern Makes of Looms, Jacquards, Warpers, Beamers, Dressers, Slashers, Winders, Spoolers, etc. Also Illustrating and Explaining the Latest Improvements in Shuttles, Temples, Pickers, Reeds, Heddles, Harnesses, etc. For the use of Manufacturers, Mill Managers, Designers, Overseers, Loom Fixers, Students and Inventors.

9. Recent Improvements in Textile Machinery Part 3. A Treatise Giving a Thorough Description of the Properties and Supply of the Fibres, as well as the Various Processes Required for Converting Wool, Cotton, Silk Fibre to Finished Fabric covering both Woven and Knit Goods. Giving also descriptive

10. Silk Throwing Giving the Most Complete Data ever Published on the Various Processes Raw Silk is Subjected to When Converting it into Yarn.

11. Technology of Textile Design Being a Practical Treatise on the Construction and Application of Weaves for all Textile Fabrics, with minute reference to the latest Inventions for Weaving, Containing also An Appendix showing the Analysis and giving the Calculations necessary for the Manufacture of the various Textile Fabrics.


Appendix B — Example Illustrations from Posselt’s Books

Note: Illustrations are one-half size.

Technology of Textile Design

Textile Machinery, Part 1

Textile Machinery, Part 2

The Structure of Fibres, Yarns and Fabrics
Appendix B — Example Illustrations from Posselt’s Books

Note: Illustrations are one-half size.
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Note: Illustration is one-half size.

Gold Embossing Appearing on the Back of Several of Posselt's Books
Appendix C — Example Advertisements from Posselt’s Books

Note: Illustrations are one-half size.

CROMPTON LOOM WORKS,
—WORCESTER, MASS.

THE ORIGINAL AND MOST EXTENSIVE WORKS FOR THE BUILDING OF CARPET, FANCY WOOLEN, COTTON AND SILK LOOMS IN THIS COUNTRY.

TRAITORS OF THEIR CLASS.—

Textile Machinery, Part 1

Technology of Textile Design

JAMES JACKSON & SONS,

Textile Machinists

Jacquard Machines (Highest Improved) and Compass Boards, Specialties.

Nos. 18 and 20 Albion Avenue, PATERNON, N. J.

Textile Machinery, Part 3

JNO. DUNLOP'S SONS

Quality Organizes

Silk Throwing

March 9, 2002