

# THE LORD'S PRAYER ON THE HEAD OF A PIN

Sing Sing Prison, the late 1800s: Two guards find convicted forger A. Schiller dead in his cell. On his body, they find seven pins, each with evidence of Schiller's amazing talent. Under magnification, it is revealed that he has engraved the Lord's Prayer, all 65 words and 254 letters, on every pin.

All of the pins were astonishing, but one gold pin, whose head measured 1.17 millimeters, or 47/1000ths of an inch in diameter, was absolutely flawless—every word and line perfectly spaced, every letter completely legible. When the pin head was magnified 500 times, the Lord's Prayer could easily be read. How could Schiller have accomplished this?

Schiller, an expert engraver, had been serving a sentence for forgery. He spent the last twenty-five years of his life creating this masterpiece, sacrificing his eyesight to complete it. Using a tool too tiny to be seen by the naked eye, Schiller made 1,863 separate cuts to the pin's head to form the letters of the prayer. The remarkable engraving was an exquisite testimony to craftsmanship.

The pin was put on display at a World's Fair exhibit in 1893, but was stolen from its display case and disappeared from the public eye for more than 40 years. Miniature collector Jacques Charbneau discovered it in an antique shop in the mid-1930s, and it re-entered the miniature market. Nearly twenty years later, Ripley's purchased the pin from Orville Elton of Seattle, Washington. Today Schiller's remarkable pin is on display at Ripley's St. Augustine, Florida Odditorium.

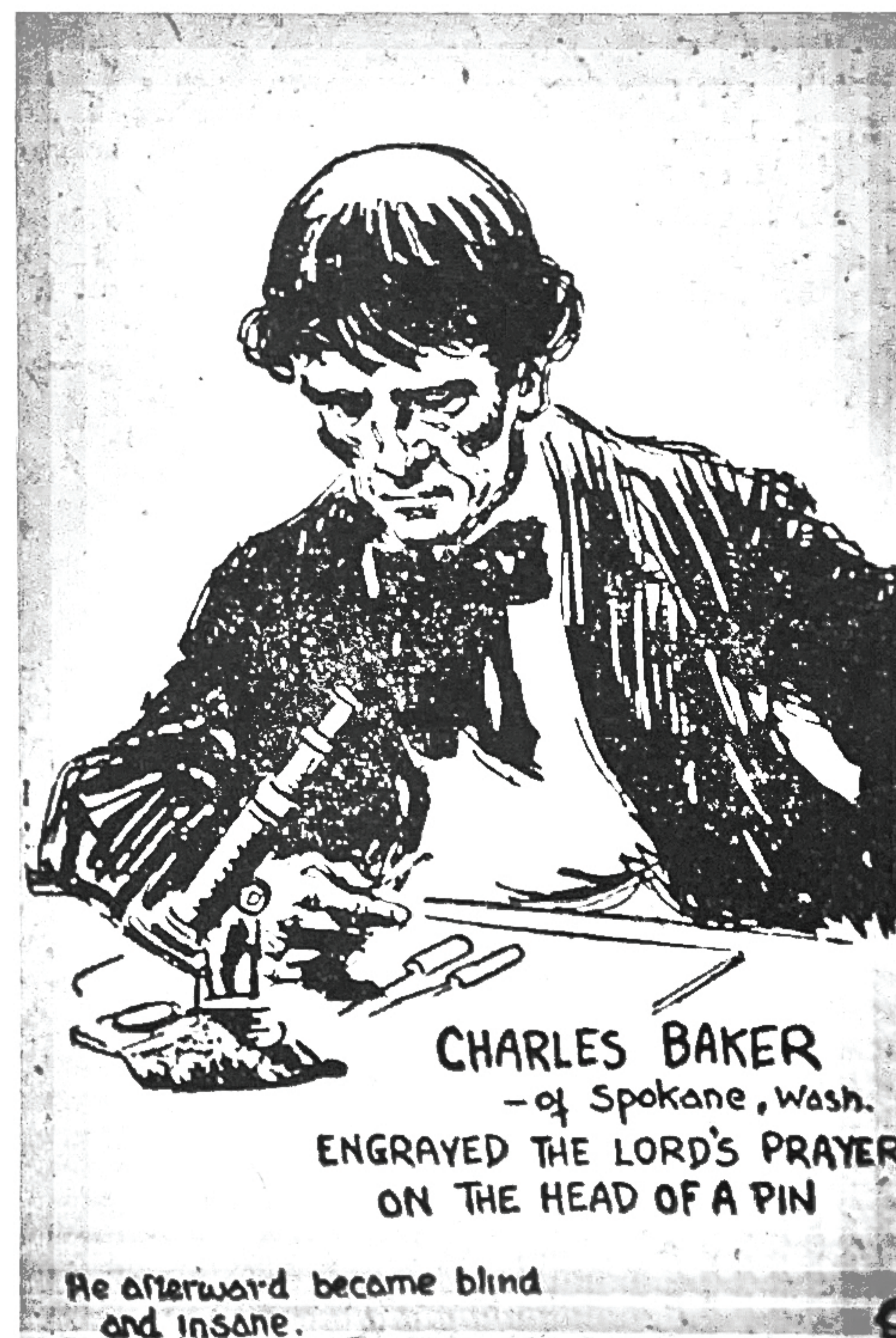
But Schiller's masterpiece is not the only pin of its type to merit a place in the Ripley legacy. A similar pin appeared in a Believe It or Not! cartoon on December 16, 1929. This pin, which allegedly took three years to complete, was credited to Charles Edward Baker of Spokane, Washington. Apparently, Mr. Baker went blind and insane from the effort!

Shortly after the cartoon was published, Ripley's received a letter from Alvin H. Hankins of Seattle, Washington, who claimed that Baker was a fraud. Hankins insisted that Charles Edward Baker didn't make the pin—the late Godfrey E. Lundberg did, before Hankins' eyes.

Hankins, a lens grinder, had been present during the entire time Lundberg worked on the pin. He told of the grueling conditions Lundberg imposed upon himself to complete the work: Lundberg worked from a barber's chair, strapping his hands to an iron bar to keep them from shaking. He also bound his wrists tightly with leather straps, because the rhythm of his pulse caused the engraving

tool to skip. Lundberg could only work on the pin in the evenings, when the rumbling trolley cars that passed by his shop had stopped running for the day. He destroyed more than two hundred pins in his attempt to create one perfect engraving.

How did Baker come to possess this controversial pin? Hankins claimed that after the masterpiece was completed, Lundberg made a tiny steel die, 110/1000ths of an inch in diameter, which was capable of stamping out copies of the original. Lundberg had sold his pin, as well as several copies, to Baker. The Lundberg pin, like the priceless Schiller pin in Ripley's Odditorium, had been engraved entirely by hand.



OPPOSITE PAGE: The Lord's Prayer on the head of a pin, greatly omagnified, engraved by A. Schiller in the late 1800s. The most legible of five, this pin is on display at the St. Augustine, Florida Odditorium.