

Notes on American Bookbindings

'ELEGANT' WORK BY A COUNTRY BOOKBINDER: TWO
GILT-EXTRA BINDINGS ATTRIBUTABLE TO HERMAN MANN,
DEDHAM, MASSACHUSETTS, CA. 1812

Richard J. Wolfe

ALTHOUGH HERMAN MANN of Dedham, Massachusetts, has long been recognized as a prolific printer in early nineteenth-century America, especially of music books, little was known of his multifarious business activities or of his work as a bookbinder until recently. It was only after locating the Mann family's papers in the Dedham Historical Society a decade ago that I was able to take full measure of Mann's occupation not only as a printer but as newspaper publisher, paper marbler, bookseller, stationer, and bookbinder.¹ His work as a binder, however, was revealed only through a single reference in extant family papers and a few scattered newspaper advertisements; no specific bookbindings, even those covering many of his printings, could be identified as his.

More recently, while doing research at the American Antiqua-

The author would like to acknowledge the assistance of Greer Hardwicke, executive director of the Dedham Historical Society, in locating bookbindings and researching information there. He also thanks Willman Spawn and Hannah D. French for reading my manuscript and for making criticisms and suggestions to improve it.

1. Richard J. Wolfe, *The Role of the Mann Family of Dedham, Massachusetts in the Marbling of Paper in Nineteenth-Century America and in the Printing of Music, the Making of Cards, and Other Booktrade Activities* ([Quincy, Mass.: Halliday Lithographers, 1981]).

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rian Society on a book on the history of marbled paper,² I came upon a somewhat elaborate binding on an edition of Isaac Watt's *Hymns and Spiritual Songs* printed by Mann at Dedham in 1811³ that, all evidence and reasoning indicated, Herman Mann had placed there himself. Subsequently, I was able to locate in the Dedham Historical Society a strikingly similar, though not quite identical, binding on an edition of Watts's paraphrases of the *Psalms of David* that Mann had also printed the same year.⁴ These two closely related bindings on Herman Mann printings, one of them found in the very area where he was active, and other evidence, provide convincing proof that Mann was responsible for the covering of both of these volumes.

These unsigned bindings are remarkable not only because they reveal the work of a craftsman who has not positively been identified before but also because they undoubtedly show the best type of work that he was capable of producing. This article will describe and discuss these elaborate examples of Herman Mann's book-binding skill, will ascribe several examples of plainer work to him, and will summarize all of his known activities as a bookbinder in his specific period and locale.

Herman Mann's career is representative of the jack-of-all-trades situation that many American bookmakers were forced into in order to survive during the early days of the Republic, when money was always scarce and commerce often dubious. Having purchased an interest in the local newspaper, the Dedham *Minerva*, in 1797, transforming himself from schoolteacher to publisher in the pro-

2. Richard J. Wolfe, *Marbled Paper, Its History, Techniques, and Patterns, with Special Reference to the Relationship of Marbling to Bookbinding in Europe and the Western World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, in press).

3. Isaac Watts, *Hymns and Spiritual Songs. In Three Books . . . To Which is Subjoined a Fourth Book of Selected Hymns, Adapted to Various Subjects and Occasions. H. Mann's First Corrected Edition* (Dedham, Mass.: Printed by H. Mann, 1811).

4. Isaac Watts, *The Psalms of David, Imitated in the Language of the New Testament; and Now Applied to the Christian State and Worship. Together with Hymns and Spiritual Songs. In Three Books . . . To Which is Now Prefixed, a Sketch of the Life of the Author. And To the Whole Is Subjoined, a Fourth Book of Occasional Hymns. In Two Volumes. H. Mann's First Corrected Edition* (Dedham, Mass.: Printed by H. Mann, 1811).

cess,⁵ Mann soon was busy printing a steady stream of books and pamphlets to increase his income and support a growing family. Furthermore, in the following decade he tried his hand at paper making (1800) and became deeply involved in music printing (1804)—a specialized trade that had attracted only a limited number of printers previously and to which a knowledge of music fitted him—before venturing into paper marbling (1809), in which business he continued for a very long time. All the while, he labored as newspaper publisher and performed the functions of bookseller and stationer.

As early as December 1800, Herman Mann advertised in his newspaper that 'bookbinding is carried on at the *Minerva Office*.—Second hand books rebound, as reasonably as in Boston, or elsewhere.'⁶ That he continued to work as a bookbinder is indicated by his other allusions to bookbinding over the next twenty years, though such information is sporadic and often brief. In July 1808, there appeared in the *Norfolk Repository*, the newspaper that Mann had commenced in 1805, about nine months after the *Minerva* had failed, the following notice, the most complete one known that relates to his bookbinding activity.⁷

Book-Binding

H. Mann

At his Book-Store in Dedham, carries on Book-Binding in its several branches, and on the most reasonable terms. Old books *rebound*.

5. Herman Mann's entry into publishing was accidental. Having found the manuscript journal of a young woman of Massachusetts who had served in disguise in the American army during the Revolutionary War, and having edited it and wishing to publish it in honor of his young wife, the idealistic schoolteacher of nearby Walpole came to Dedham in June of 1797 in search of a printer. Before much time had passed, he had become half-partner in the printing establishment of the Dedham *Minerva*, a weekly newspaper begun a year earlier by Nathaniel and Benjamin Heaton, the first printers in that town. By the end of the year Mann was sole owner and publisher of the *Minerva*. His manuscript was published by the Heatons, however, before the year 1797 was out, under the title *The Female Review; or, Memoirs of an American Young Lady; Whose Life and Character Are Particularly Distinguished—Being a Continental Soldier, for Nearly Three Years, in the Late American War*.

6. The advertisement appeared in the issue of December 9, 1800, and for several issues afterward.

7. Mann's notice first appeared in the *Norfolk Repository* on July 19, 1808 (vol. 2, no. 36, p. 290); it reappeared in several subsequent issues.

Blank books ruled and bound to any pattern and size. Calf and sheepskins, well tanned (white oak is best) whole grain, and shaved thin for the above business, will at any time be received in pay for books, bookbinding, &c.

The next reference to Herman Mann's bookbinding activity that I have observed appears in a letter that he sent to his wife in mid-1814. Having removed his printing business from Dedham to Providence, Rhode Island, late in 1812 for some unexplained reason, Mann nonetheless continued to work intermittently in Dedham and elsewhere in order to eke out a marginal living. Writing to his wife, Sarah, then in Providence, from Dedham, following a trip to Needham, Herman remarked, 'I miss the printing office in binding.'⁸ By April or May of 1815 Mann and his family had returned to Dedham, this time for good. He soon opened up his Norfolk bookstore, which he continued to operate until his death in 1833.

The final allusion to Herman Mann's work in bookbinding that I know of appeared in 1821 in the local newspaper, the *Village Register and Norfolk County Advertiser* (then being printed by Mann's sons, Herman Mann, Jr., and William H. Mann, for its proprietor, J. H. Cobb). In issues from mid-February through late April, Mann advertised

Marble Paper,
Bookbinding, &c.

At the Norfolk *Bookstore*, Dedham, (Mass.) is manufactured MARBLE-PAPER, of various qualities, and all the sizes, polished and unpolished. Also, *Book-binding* in all its branches.—Old books rebound, at the shortest notice.⁹

Mann's occupation as a bookbinder is thus indicated for a period of twenty-one years, and we may assume that he continued this part of his business long after 1821. His output, mainly of plain bindings, may well have been considerable. It must also be pointed

8. Herman Mann to Sarah Mann, Dedham, July 12, 1814. Mann Papers, Dedham Historical Society.

9. This notice appeared in issues from February 16 through April 27.

out that a printed broadside announcing the sale of Herman Mann's estate at auction, held in Dedham on Monday, March 23, 1835, listed, at the very top of the inventory of his possessions to be sold, 'Lot of Bookbinder's Rolls and Tools.' (Also listed was 'A quantity of Watts' Psalms and Hymns.')

¹⁰

In order to utilize every available paper supply in those years of wartime shortages and economic depression, around 1812 or 1813 Herman and his oldest son Daniel resorted to the practice of overmarbling printed waste sheets from their own printing shop as well as surplus sheets obtained from other printers, seemingly from as far away as New York City. If Herman and Daniel (and later sons Samuel, Edward, and Franklin) were not the only craftsmen plying the marbling trade in the Boston area after 1809 (and every piece of evidence that I have seen indicates that they probably were the only ones), they were by far the most active and prolific makers, not only then but for many decades afterward.

It was while attempting to identify their printings beneath layers of paint on some of these overmarbled sheets that I encountered the first of the two volumes that are the subject of this discussion. I recognized what I had stumbled upon almost from the very moment that I had opened the book's covers and observed the marbled lining papers within and had correlated these and the imprint of the book with the somewhat unusual skin covering the volume, with the tooling on its covers and spine, and with all of the fragmentary facts that I had assembled on Herman Mann over more than a decade of research. While we may suspect with good reason that Herman Mann may have had a hand in covering many of the early imprints that issued from his press, all of the bindings on Mann printings that I had previously encountered were plain and simple ones: unadorned sheepskin (or half or, more often, quarter sheepskin and marbled paper covering the remainder of the boards), with plainly lettered red, green, or black leather labels

10. This printed broadside can be found among probate records in the registry office of Norfolk County in Dedham, within a packet of documents and other papers relating to Herman Mann's estate.

and only gilt fillets on their spines—nothing more. The country folk inhabiting Norfolk County in those days, who undoubtedly made up the preponderance of Herman's customers, would rarely pay for more. But, of course, there were exceptions, as is proved by the two elegant volumes under discussion.

As I point out in my book on the history of marbling,¹¹ it is no accident that many of the examples of ornate American bookbinding surviving from an earlier age cover Bibles, prayer books, and hymn and psalm books. These were among the most personal and cherished possessions of the deeply religious individuals who settled our country. In Bibles were recorded family genealogies and precious records; prayer and hymn books were utilized by a reverent populace to communicate with and sing the praises of its God. If an ordinary book purchaser of that period, having himself or herself in mind or intending to make a present to a loved one, would choose to have *one* book covered with fine leather and pay dearly to have it ornately tooled, it would probably be a work of this type, one that would be especially prized for its spiritual value and its frequent use in worship. The recent catalogues of the Papantonio¹² and Maser¹³ collections of early American bookbindings, as well as the list of figures in the recently published edition of Hannah D. French's collected essays on early American bookbinding,¹⁴ strongly corroborate the validity of such a conclusion. At the same time, these and other sources also show that different types of literature and book productions sometimes received fine bindings as well, particularly as the nineteenth century advanced.¹⁵

11. Chapter 8, footnote 32.

12. *Early American Bookbindings from the Collection of Michael Papantonio*, 2d ed. (Worcester: American Antiquarian Society, 1985).

13. *Bookbinding in America, 1680-1910, from the Collection of Frederick E. Maser. With an Essay by Willman Spawn* (Bryn Mawr, Pa.: Bryn Mawr College Library, 1983).

14. Hannah D. French, *Bookbinding in Early America; Seven Essays on Masters and Methods. With Catalogues of Bookbinding Tools Prepared by Willman Spawn* (Worcester: American Antiquarian Society, 1986).

15. As the lists and illustrations in the works cited in the previous three notes indicate, nonreligious books that often received better bindings were literary ones, volumes of laws and statutes, and, in fact, any volume that its owner deemed special. Often placed in

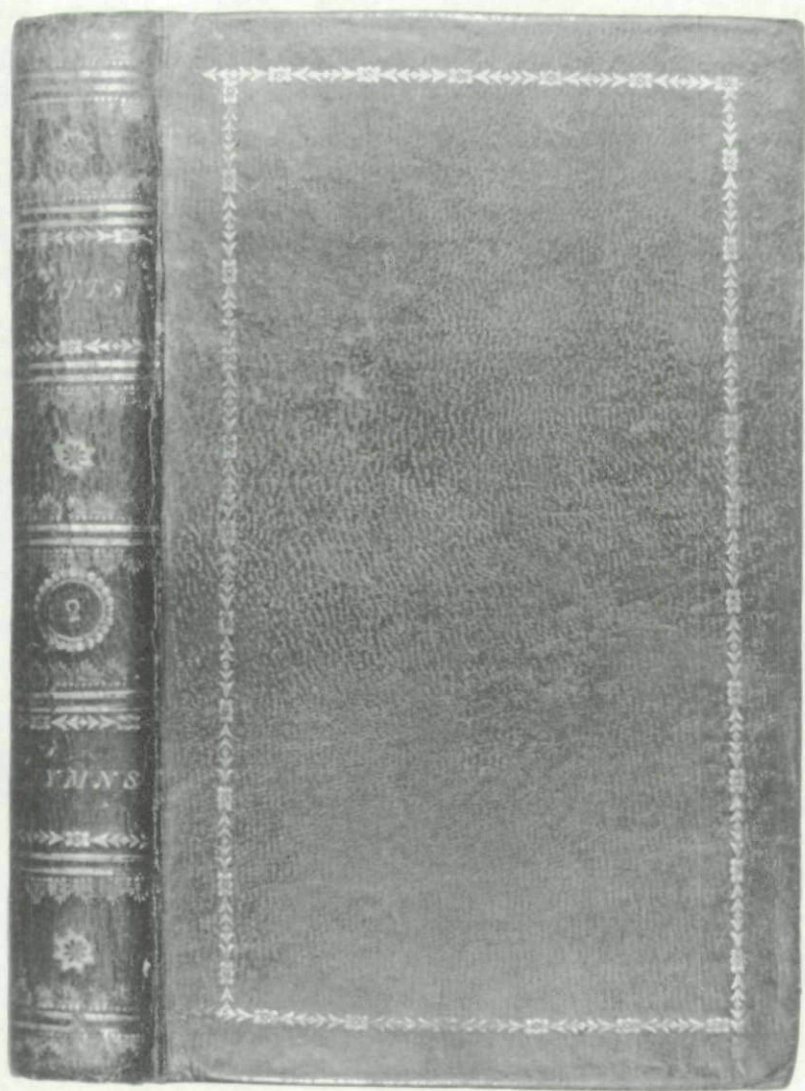


Fig. 1. Spine and front cover of Isaac Watts's *Hymns and Spiritual Songs*, printed by Herman Mann at Dedham, Massachusetts, in 1811 and presumably bound by him. American Antiquarian Society. The binding appears at 71 percent of original size.

The binding on the copy of Isaac Watts's *Hymns and Spiritual Songs* illustrated in figure 1 appears both somewhat lavish and at the same time rather simple—lavish, as would be expected of a gilt-extra binding, and simple because it was a country bookbinder who had undertaken the task, one whose time and attention was not fully devoted to this work. The physical features of this binding can be briefly summarized. The material covering the pasteboard consists of a rather coarse, whole-grain calfskin, originally tanned or later dyed to a dark brown but appearing lighter here and there, perhaps because of wear from handling. Although of good quality, the skin was not as thinly shaved or of as high a quality as skins then being used by the best bookbinders in urban centers like Boston, Philadelphia, or New York.

Both covers were gilt-tooled near their edges with a single ornamental roll. The spine was divided into eight compartments by seven pairs of thick double fillets, with each pair flanked by a rolled ornament. One of these flanking ornaments was imprinted with the very roll employed to decorate the covers, while the other—showing rows of dots with rays emanating from them in ascending and descending order—is a totally dissimilar one. The second, fourth, and seventh compartments were ornamented with a small center stamp; the third compartment was lettered 'WATTS' and the sixth one 'HYMNS'; and in the fifth compartment the numeral '2' appears within an ornamental circular stamp. Finally, the board edges were ornamented with a roll showing alternate thick and thin oblique lines, with the thinner one composed of a series of closely spaced dots. The tools used to help make this binding an 'extra' one were thus few in number: in addition to the letter stamps and the one for the numeral, its maker used only three ornamental rolls, two ornamental stamps, and a thick fillet roll.

It is obvious that the tooling along the upper edge of the front cover extends well beyond the limits of the vertical roll on the inner edge coming up to meet it; as a result, the top roll overlaps

gilt-extra bindings also were presentation books, author's copies of their own books, theses, and special editions issued through subscription.

the other one rather awkwardly (and a similar overlapping appears in the lower corners also). In spite of this and other obvious defects (such as lines that are not straight and rolled ornamentation that does not repeat properly), suggesting that Herman Mann was less than expert in handling some of these tools, we are presented with a charming binding, but one which, in terms of high quality and craftsmanship, must be rated below the productions of the best binders of this era.

The volume has a headband of alternated red and white silk thread, and the turn-ins of the covers are without ornamentation. The marbled lining paper shows the design that later came to be known most familiarly in English-speaking countries as 'Stormont,' with black, red, yellow, and dark blue making up the vein colors, and with a dark blue Stormont or lacy ground color predominating among them. The veins are overly large and have not been well dispersed (a defect that is typical of almost all American marbles of this period), and there are many signs of cloyed color and of irregular and large holes in the Stormont spots, indicating that the marbler was not greatly adept in controlling them.

The Stormont design is the only one that the Manns were making at this time, and the example here is somewhat typical of the pattern they produced. It appears on many of the early papers that I have been able to positively identify as their work.¹⁶ It was these marbled ends, together with the unusually rough grain of the leather, the few tools employed to ornament it, the less than expert ability of the binder using them, and, of course, the imprint, that convinced me that Herman Mann had to be responsible for binding this book.

Two other facts are pertinent here. The numeral '2' on the book's spine indicates that this volume was meant to accompany another (still unidentified), entirely separate work, because this edition of Watts's *Hymns* is complete in one volume. Of special

16. The marbled end papers in this volume, and its front cover and spine as well, are pictured in color on plate 19 of my history of marbled paper, along with several examples of the Manns' overmarbled paper.

importance is an early signature and some manuscript notations penned on the verso of the flyleaf that follows the front free end paper. Here is written, in an early hand, the name 'R. Sanger,' followed by a lengthy note in an equally early but seemingly different hand. The information the note contains helps explain the circumstances behind the clothing of this volume in a special binding and the approximate date when the binding took place. The note reads:

Order of Service.

A.M.

- 1st. Short Prayer
- 2nd. Read the Scriptures
- 3rd. Sing
- 4th. Long Prayer
- 5th. Sing
- 6th. Sermon
- 7th. Prayer
- 8th. Blessing

P.M.

The same with an additional singing¹⁷

The contents of the above note suggest that it was written by or for a minister to help him organize his service. R. Sanger, then, was likely to be a minister and not merely an ordinary worshiper. A standard work on colonial New England clergy does reveal the name of a minister named Sanger who was active near Dedham at this time; however, it refers not to an 'R. Sanger' but one named Zedekiah.¹⁸ Because Zedekiah Sanger figures into this narrative, a few sentences about him are called for.

In his *Annals of the American Pulpit*, William Buell Sprague

17. The only other manuscript notation in this volume is an accession record made at the time of its acquisition by the American Antiquarian Society. On the verso of the front free end-paper appears a penciled note recording that the book was the gift of Charles F. Feeney, February 15, 1921.

18. Frederick Lewis Weis, *The Colonial Clergy and the Colonial Churches of New England* (Lancaster, Mass.: Society of the Descendants of the Colonial Clergy, 1936), p. 181.

placed Zedekiah Sanger among the fifty most eminent Congregational Unitarian ministers in America.¹⁹ Born at Sherborn, Massachusetts, in 1748, Zedekiah graduated from Harvard College in 1771, taking not only the A.B. but the A.M. degree as well. Between his degrees, Sanger kept school in Dedham. In 1776 he was ordained over the First Congregational Parish at Duxbury and in 1788 was called to the ministry of the South Parish of Bridgewater, where he remained for the rest of his life. Dr. Sanger (Brown University conferred the D.D. degree on him in 1807) also had an interest in mathematics and science, which caused him to be named a charter member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. He was also a founding member and preceptor of the Bridgewater Academy, and he later devoted much of his time to preparing college graduates for the ministry prior to his death at Bridgewater in 1820. His detailed biography in Sibley's *Harvard Graduates*²⁰ reveals that he had two sons whose first names began with the initial 'R': Richard (born in 1778, graduated from Harvard in 1800) and Ralph (born in 1786, graduated from Harvard in 1808). Little is known of Richard, other than that he died in 1831;²¹ Ralph, like his father, became a well-known clergyman. Ralph Sanger is probably the one who signed the 'R. Sanger' notation of ownership in our elegantly bound copy of Watts's *Hymns and Spiritual Songs*.

19. William Buell Sprague, *Annals of the American Pulpit; or Commemorative Notices of Distinguished American Clergymen of the Unitarian Denomination in the United States, from Its Commencement to the Close of the Year Eighteen Hundred and Fifty-Five* (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1865), pp. 99-105. This was issued as volume 8 of his *Annals of the American Pulpit; or, Commemorative Notices of Distinguished Clergymen of Various Denominations*. The reference to Sanger as one of the 'fifty' most important Unitarian ministers comes from Smith's *Genealogical History of Dover*, cited in footnote 22, below. Sprague actually lists eighty of the earliest American Unitarian ministers in chronological order, with Zedekiah Sanger listed seventeenth among them.

20. Clifford K. Shipton, *Sibley's Harvard Graduates: Biographical Sketches of Those Who Attended Harvard College in the Classes [1690-1770]*, vols. 4-17 (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1975), 17: 611-13.

21. His folder among the records of the Class of 1800 in the Harvard University Archives in the Pusey Library in Cambridge contains only his birth and death dates; nothing else seems to be recorded about him. His death date is also given in Harvard University's *Quinquennial Catalogue of the Officers and Graduates, 1636-1930* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1930), p. 208.

After graduating from Harvard with highest honors in his class, Ralph Sanger taught Latin in Concord and in 1809 was appointed tutor at Harvard, a position he held for two years. In 1812, he accepted a call to the Dover First Parish Church and remained pastor there until his death in 1860 (such calls usually presupposed that the ministry was for life); however, he did reside at Cambridge during his last three years, where he was senior pastor following the award by Harvard of the D.D. degree to him in 1857.²²

It therefore seems more than merely speculative to conclude from the note in the Watts's *Hymns* and other evidence presented here that, upon his assumption of the ministry at Dover (a neighboring town to Dedham) in 1812, Ralph Sanger, or, more than likely, his father or another member of his family purchased this recently published copy of Isaac Watts's *Hymns and Spiritual Songs* for the young clergyman's use in conducting services there. Because of the extraordinary nature of the occasion—his embarkation on a life-long ministry—the purchaser had Herman Mann place a more than ordinary binding on it, indeed, the very best one that he was capable of producing. Two facts indicate that Herman Mann knew Zedekiah Sanger personally and thus would be inclined to put his best binding on a book or pair of books intended for the minister's son: in 1808 Herman Mann had printed Zedekiah Sanger's collection of sacred music, *The Meridian Harmony*;²³ and in early 1813, following his move to Providence, he also printed the very sermon that Dr. Sanger delivered at his son's ordination at Dover on September 16, 1812.²⁴

We can picture Zedekiah Sanger or another member of his family traveling from Bridgewater to nearby Dedham one spring

22. I found the most complete information on Ralph Sanger in Frank Smith's *The Genealogical History of Dover, Massachusetts, Tracing All Families Previous to 1850, and Many Families That Have Lived in the Town Since, with an Account of the Habits and Customs of the People* (Dover, Mass.: The Historical and Natural History Society, 1917), pp. 208–12.

23. Zedekiah Sanger, *The Meridian Harmony* (Dedham, Mass.: Printed by Herman Mann, for the author, 1808).

24. Zedekiah Sanger, *The Christian Minister an Ambassador of Christ. A Sermon, Preached September 16, 1812, at the Ordination of the Rev. Ralph Sanger to the Pastoral Care of the Church and Society in Dover* (Providence, R.I.: H. Mann, printer, 1813).

or summer day in 1812 to visit Herman Mann's bookstore, where the Watts's volume was purchased and arrangements made to decorate it in the special manner depicted in figure 1. And afterwards, as a guide to the young minister in following the order of the services he would conduct, his father wrote the note on the verso of the flyleaf. The signature 'R. Sanger' is a smallish and precise one; the directions for the order of service appear in a bolder and more experienced hand, one that would be representative of a seasoned minister who knew the ropes and was giving directions to a neophyte and inexperienced clergyman. We can also imagine young Ralph Sanger consulting the flyleaf of his hymn book to make sure that he was carrying out his father's advice when conducting his initial services at Dover in 1812.

Because the numeral '2' has been stamped onto the spine of the Watts's *Hymns*, we may conclude that it was accompanied by another sacred work. This was probably a copy of the edition of Watts's paraphrases of the *Psalms of David* that Mann had also published in 1811 and most probably identically bound. Such a set of books would equip the young minister with complete texts of Watts's psalms and hymns for use when conducting services. I searched the American Antiquarian Society's collections in an attempt to locate the ornately bound companion volume, but found only another volume containing both of Herman Mann's printings of the two Watts's texts bound together in a plainer and unrelated binding. Nor did I find the volume in the Dedham Historical Society, where I looked next. However, I did encounter in Dedham the other Mann gilt-extra binding of Watts's *Psalms of David* that is illustrated in figure 2.

This edition of the Watts work is bound similarly, though not identically, in whole-grain calf, and its design follows closely that on the binding of the Watts *Hymns* in the American Antiquarian Society, although its tooling is not quite as ornate, and it lacks marbled end papers. Three of the same rolls and the same panel stamp were employed in similar fashion to ornament it. This binding contains an additional and unusual feature that seems to

further associate Herman Mann with its making: the phrase 'Mann's Edition' is stamped in gilt on one of the lower panels of the spine. Who else but its publisher would mark the spine of a book's cover in this way? Furthermore, the identification of the edition here recalls the use of the phrase 'H. Mann's first corrected edition' on the title-pages of his two Watts's imprints of 1811. Thus, it does not exactly match the binding executed for Ralph Sanger; indeed, it was done for an entirely different owner. This other alleged Herman Mann gilt-extra binding contains a simple bookplate that indicates that it belonged to one Joseph Onion, a member of one of the older families of Dedham. (One of the early houses still standing in Dedham today is familiarly known as the 'Onion house.')

Undoubtedly, this too was made 'special' to help celebrate a special occasion.

The Dedham Historical Society's collections also contain a few other bindings that might be attributed to Herman Mann. They can be associated with him because the ornamental roll used to decorate the covers of the gilt-extra bindings discussed and illustrated above were also employed to decorate their spines and also because they are found today on Herman Mann imprints in the area where he produced them, along with a great many similar but plainer bindings covering his printings. These other examples are simple, quarter bindings, with sheepskin glued over their spines and with marbled paper over scabbard in one case and over paste-board in the other. Their binder, presumably Herman Mann, used the ornamental roll in place of the more usual fillet to give them a little more dash. The plain bindings illustrated in figures 3A and 3B cover a copy of the edition of Thomas Gibbons's *Select Portions of Scripture, and Remarkable Occurrences*, which Mann printed in 1805, and *Book IV. Hymns Adapted to Various Subjects and Occasions*, which he subjoined to his 1811 edition of Watts's *Hymns and Spiritual Songs*. (The binding on the Gibbons's volume, it can be noted, contains some of Mann's overmarbled paper.)

Two of the ornaments used by Mann on these gilt-extra bindings can be identified with another early bookbinder working in the Boston area. The roll used to decorate their covers, as well as

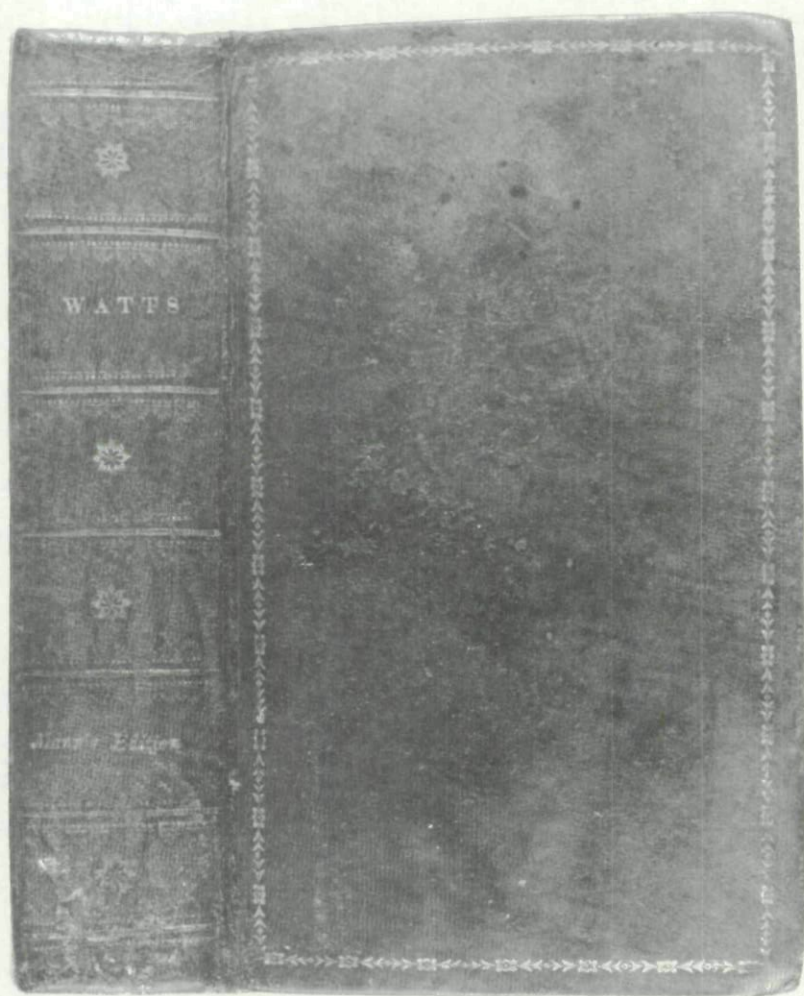
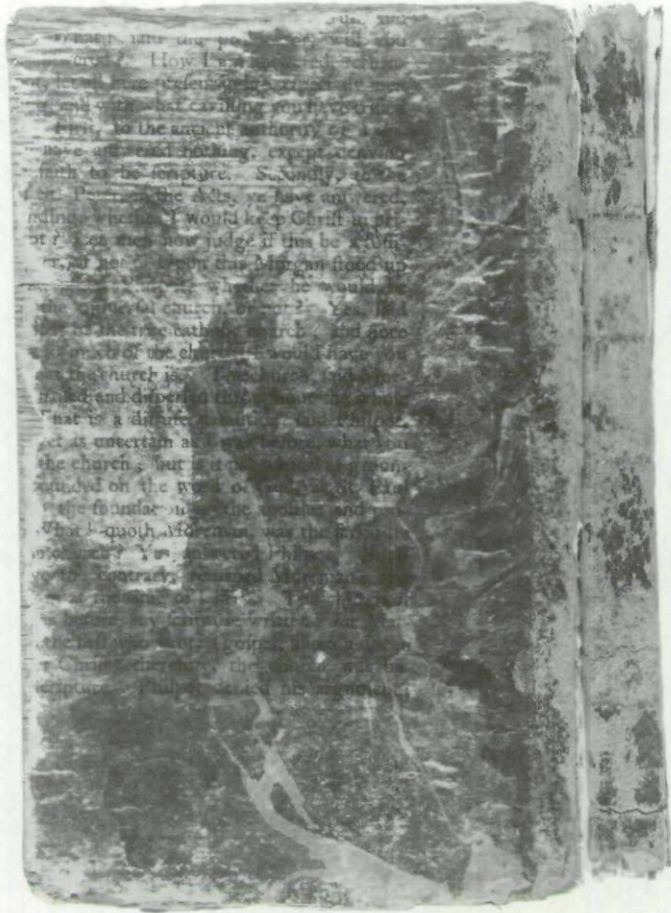


Fig. 2. Spine and front cover of Isaac Watts's *Psalms of David*, printed by Herman Mann at Dedham, Massachusetts, in 1811 and presumably bound by him. Dedham Historical Society. The binding is reproduced at 59 percent of the original size.

the one used to adorn their board edges, can be seen on a binding by Henry Bilson Legge that is illustrated in the recent Maser exhibition catalogue (number 22). Legge employed these and other tools when decorating a copy of the *Psalms and Spiritual*



Figs. 3A (above) and 3B (opposite). Two plain quarter sheepskin bindings now preserved in the Dedham Historical Society's collection of Herman Mann printings and presumably done by him. The same ornamental roll appearing on the covers of the Mann bindings in figures 1 and 2 appear on the spines of these also. The bindings cover Mann's editions of Thomas Gibbons's *Select Portions of Scrip-*



ture, and Remarkable Occurrences, 1805 (left) and Book IV, Hymns Adapted to Various Subjects and Occasions, which Mann subjoined to his 1811 edition of Isaac Watts's Hymns and Spiritual Songs (above). The Gibbons binding contains marbled paper of Mann's making showing marbling over a printed waste sheet. These bindings are reproduced at 58 percent of the original size.

Songs: Selected and Designed for the Use of the Church Universal, which Munroe & Francis issued at Boston in 1802. The Maser catalogue also shows that Legge used the board roll to decorate the extremities of the spine of a copy of the third edition of Jeremy Belknap's *Sacred Poetry, Consisting of Psalms and Hymns*, published at Boston in 1801 (number 21). This particular ornament, however, was a popular one, apparently used concurrently by several Boston and New England binders.²⁵ As is indicated by its appearance on the two gilt-extra bindings under discussion, the narrowness of this ornament fitted it ideally for rolling board edges.

Henry Bilson Legge worked in Boston from 1798, or perhaps earlier, until his death in 1803.²⁶ Many of his tools were subsequently acquired by John Roulstone, Boston's leading bookbinder during the first quarter of the nineteenth century. (Roulstone may have been trained by Legge.) From an examination of my own collection of rubbings of many Roulstone bindings, and of unidentified bindings that were partially tooled with rolls and stamps similar to ones that Roulstone used, and from the catalogue of Roulstone's known stamps and rolls appearing in Hannah French's *Bookbinding in Early America*,²⁷ I have concluded, however, that Roulstone apparently never employed the two rolls that now reappear on these two supposed Herman Mann gilt-extra bindings. Thus it is possible that Mann may have acquired these tools from Legge's estate in 1804 or afterward and used them to both decorate his gilt-extra bindings and give his plainer work a little more spirit. And because the two examples of his finest work before us are very similar both in concept and tooling, it seems likely that this may have been Herman Mann's favorite pattern to follow when executing gilt-extra work, at least in the period around 1812. With this in mind, it follows that there might well exist in libraries and in other locations additional examples of Herman Mann bookbindings with similar decoration that still remain to be identified.

25. Personal communication from Willman Spawn to the author, March 1989.

26. 'Bound in Boston by Henry B. Legge,' in French, *Bookbinding in Early America*, pp. 52-57.

27. 'John Roulstone's Harvard Bindings,' in French, *Bookbinding in Early America*, pp. 90-121. The catalogue of Roulstone's tools appears on pp. [118]-21.

Other extant bookbindings that might have some association with Herman Mann should also be mentioned, although there exists at this time no hard evidence actually connecting him with their making. Tools used to ornament these bindings and other circumstantial proofs, however, justify reference to them here. In the Dedham Historical Society I found another copy of Mann's 1811 edition of Isaac Watts's *Psalms of David* contained in an unusual binding. Its boards are covered with a thick and rough-grained sheepskin that has been very poorly tree-marbled, and there is a red-leather label on its spine. The label is decorated with a simple ornamental roll, applied three times, and the spine shows a large and unusual stamp, applied in five locations; furthermore, its board edges are ornamented with the same roll that appears on the two gilt-extra bindings that are the main subject of this discussion. There are also many rough aspects about this binding that are similar to other early nineteenth-century Dedham bindings. Additionally, marks of ownership within associate it with early Dedham residents and indicate that it had remained in Dedham up to the time of its acquisition by the Dedham Historical Society in 1879.²⁸

In the American Antiquarian Society I located a binding on another of Herman Mann's printings, a copy of David Vinton's *Masonick Minstrel*, published in 1816, which, I believe, can also be associated with his making. Bound in full sheepskin, with no cover decoration, and having an unadorned red-leather label on its spine, this volume also contains on its spine four gilt impressions of the panel stamp appearing on the 1811 Watts's *Hymns and Spiritual Songs* as well as a single impression of the standard masonic symbol, the mason's square and dividers. The spine of this binding and the one on Mann's 1811 edition of the *Psalms of David* are both illustrated in figure 4.

I subsequently found in the Dedham Historical Society another copy of the *Masonick Minstrel* in a similar though somewhat plainer

²⁸. This volume contains the original bookplate and signature of Sophia M. Smith, of Dedham, and the separate manuscript note 'Dedham Historical Society from Geo. F. Fisher, May, 1879.'

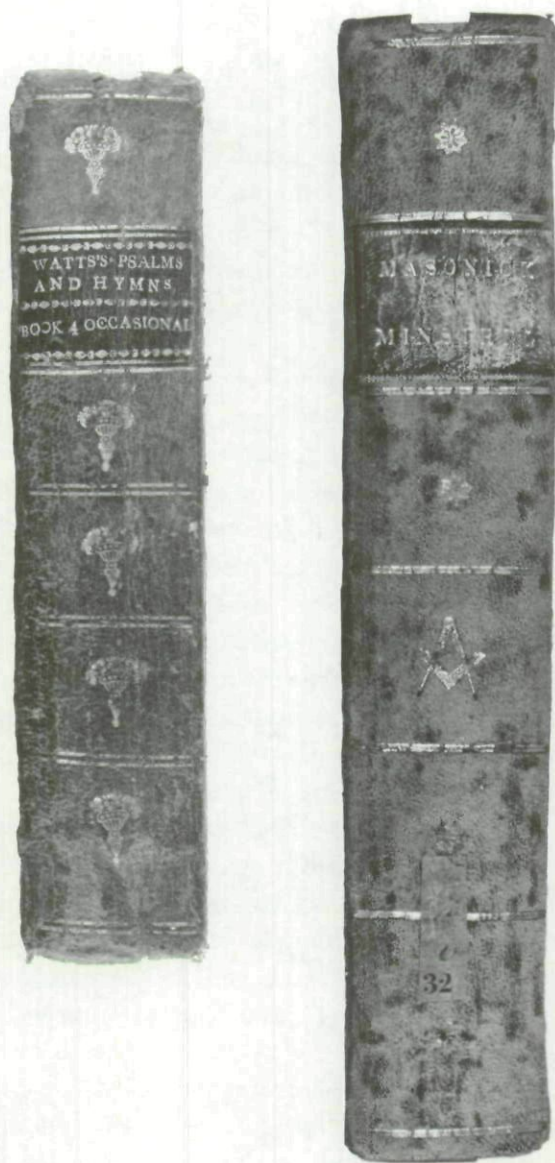


Fig. 4. Other bindings possibly executed by Herman Mann. On a copy of the Watts's *Psalms of David* (left), printed by Mann in 1811 and now preserved in the Dedham Historical Society; and on a copy of David Vinton's *Masonic Minstrel* (right), printed by Mann in 1816 and now preserved in the American Antiquarian Society. The Watts volume is reproduced at 63 percent of the original size; the Vinton binding appears at 49 percent of the original size.

binding. Covered also in full sheepskin, but of a lesser quality, and with a red-leather label on its spine, its spine also shows the same masonic symbol in an almost identical location. And while it was decorated only with plain gilt fillets, the upper and lower edges of the label were bordered with the same ornamental roll appearing on the covers of the two gilt-extra bindings in figures 1 and 2. The Mann family papers indicate that Herman Mann was involved in masonry; thus, it seems a likely conclusion that he may have bound many copies of his edition of David Vinton's *Masonick Minstrel* for his lodge brothers and others, procuring a stamp of the masonic symbol for special adornment on them.

In the absence of concrete evidence—a signed or ticketed binding, which was a rare occurrence (and in Herman Mann's case probably unlikely), or a receipt or some other record of purchase—it has been impossible to identify the makers of most of our early American bookbindings. It is becoming increasingly apparent to everyone interested in this field that earlier on bookbinder's rolls and stamps were produced in large quantities (and probably somewhat cheaply) and in a variety of nearly identical patterns. Prevailing evidence, in the form of engraver's catalogues, pattern books and sheets, price lists, inventories, and the like, some of which are listed in Graham Pollard and Esther Potter's *Early Bookbinding Manuals*,²⁹ indicate that similar tools were continually manufactured—apparently a large number of them in England—and distributed widely through agents and bookbinders' supply houses in Britain, America, and elsewhere. They could be, and apparently were, also obtained locally, wherever die sinkers and engravers on brass were available to undertake their manufacture.³⁰ As a result,

29. Graham Pollard and Esther Potter, *Early Bookbinding Manuals: An Annotated List of Technical Accounts of Bookbinding to 1840* (Oxford: Oxford Bibliographical Society, 1984), pp. 51–55. Willman Spawn has passed on to me references to a few other catalogues of bookbinding tools not recorded by Pollard and Potter.

30. Stamps employed to decorate bookbindings shared an analogous role with those used to strike musical notation into soft pewter plates from which editions of sheet music were worked off in these early times; they were also similar to punches used to decorate saddles and leather goods, to chase silver and various metal wares, and for a variety of similar purposes. I discuss their abundance and similarity to music and other punches in my *Early American Music Engraving and Printing* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1980), pp.

binders in many locations obtained and employed similar tools, applying them in a mixture of styles from binding to binding as they attempted to make individual bindings appear 'fresh' (although, it is obvious, they often imitated the work of leading craftsmen). Furthermore, tools were loaned to apprentices, associates, and friends, and tools migrated widely when masters passed from the scene and their places and equipment were assumed by others.

An indication of how difficult it is to identify bookbindings through the medium of tools alone, and how careful one must be when attempting to do so, is afforded by illustration 28 in the Papantonio catalogue. This shows a binding that S. Wadsworth of New Haven had applied to a copy of David Ramsay's *Life of George Washington*, issued at New York in 1807, for it contains Wadsworth's ticket in it. Its spine is decorated with a roll that is strikingly similar, though not identical, to one that Herman Mann used to decorate the two elaborate bindings under discussion, the roll having dots with rays emanating from them. The use of nearly identical tools simultaneously or almost concurrently by binders in locations far removed from one another is indicative of common sources of supply, with bookbinder's supply houses or agents being the most probable ones. And it shows, once more, how popular patterns were copied widely by engravers and other makers and distributed through such sources. In order to differentiate between similar-appearing tools, Willman Spawn (as he notes on p. 31 of the Maser catalogue) has resorted to the use of an instrument he refers to as the ten-unit divider. By means of this tool, he is able to differentiate between rolls that, while appearing to be identical to the naked eye, show irregularities when divided into units and ultimately prove to be different from one another.

Thus, the problem of early bookbinding identification is a complicated and often frustrating one that will have to be addressed in

132ff., and in an article, 'John Goodman (1778-1848) of Frankfort, Kentucky: Musician, Music Teacher, Musical Instrument Maker, Engraver, and First Publisher of Sheet Music West of the Allegheny Mountains,' to be published in 1990 in a festschrift for Carleton Sprague Smith.

greater depth if we are to make further headway in this field. There simply are not enough signed and ticketed bindings or enough sales and other records to allow us more than a small view of the larger events that took place. The recent Papantonio and Maser catalogues, and the volume of Hannah French's collected essays, with copious illustrations and tool catalogues, have been important steps in the right direction, but more is needed if we are to make further progress toward identification and ascription. The publication of facsimile editions of extant tool catalogues and pattern sheets—the more complete and important ones, at least—could result in other significant advances.

In the meantime, the two gilt-extra bindings that form the basis of this discussion, and the other bindings described along with them, afford us some previously unavailable insights into Herman Mann's bookbinding activities; we are also given a rare view of the work of an early country bookbinder, and our knowledge of early American bookbinding practice is increased accordingly. Moreover, the manuscript note in the American Antiquarian Society's copy of Mann's 1811 printing of Isaac Watts's *Hymns and Spiritual Songs* has allowed us to reconstruct a poignant episode that occurred in the life of a young minister more than 175 years ago, just as he was setting out on his life-long journey as a shepherd to his flock: in celebration of the occasion, the special binding of a book or set of books to aid him in his work, to serve as a memento of his ordination, and to inspire him and hold him steadfast and resolute in his path along the way.

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