

*The First Hundred Years of Printing
in British North America:
Printers and Collectors*

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THIS YEAR marks the 350th anniversary of printing in what is now the United States. In the first century of that period the business of printing was in its infancy, confined to a handful of developing cities on the Atlantic seaboard and practiced by a small number of craftsmen. Even before the first century drew to a close in 1740, a historian, Thomas Prince, was attempting to collect the materials printed in the British colonies in North America. And ever since then, collectors, bibliographers, and libraries have painstakingly reassembled what remains of the production of the early presses, culminating this year in the completion of the pre-1801 phase of the North American Imprints Program (NAIP), sponsored by the American Antiquarian Society. The exhibition on display in Antiquarian Hall shows seventy notable

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imprints from the Bay Psalm Book of 1640 to the first American cookbook of 1742. The show is drawn entirely from the Society's collections, but the earlier provenance of the items tells a story, too, for in some instances the tale of how these imprints survived is as interesting as the story of their creation.

The circumstances of printers in British North America and the kinds of items they printed were not consistent throughout the colonial period. Much of the evidence we have of the doings of colonial printers comes from the late colonial era, and indeed Lawrence Wroth, in his seminal work, *The Colonial Printer*, draws examples from throughout the pre-1801 period covered by Charles Evans's *American Bibliography*. Wroth and others since have tended to discuss the colonial printers in terms of their circumstances during the thirty or forty years before the Revolution. There was, of course, some uniformity in conditions. The most consistent element was the actual technology of printing, which changed very little from the middle of the seventeenth century to the end of the eighteenth—so little that Isaiah Thomas could suspect in 1792 that he had located the press used by Stephen Daye, still functioning in the shop of Timothy Green III in New London.¹ Another factor that remained constant was the urban nature of the printing business. Printing remained confined to the large towns of the seaboard and the seats of colonial government until the 1750s, and only a few towns in the interior had presses before the Revolution. Other factors changed radically, especially during the decades of the 1720s and 1730s, when the craft of printing spread rapidly, the advent of newspapers altered the economic and political position of the printers, and the maturing urban centers of the colonies offered greater opportunities for job printing. I think there are substantial differences between the tenuous early colonial printer's world and the comparatively well-

1. Clifford K. Shipton, *Isaiah Thomas, Printer, Patriot and Philanthropist* (New York, 1948), p. 79; Isaiah Thomas, *The History of Printing in America*, rev. ed. (Barre, Mass., 1970), p. 298. For discussion whether or not this was the Daye press, see Marcus McCorison, 'The Old Press at the Vermont Historical Society,' *Printing and Graphic Arts* 7 (1959): 84-88.

established circumstances of printing after the swift changes of the 1720-40 period. The first century of printing encompasses the early period as well as the transition to the press of late colonial times.

Who were the printers of the first century? It is not easy to arrive at a comprehensive list of names. The master printers who ran their own shops can be tabulated, but our knowledge of who worked as journeymen and their backgrounds is scanty indeed. There is also a shadowy group whose names appear in a few imprints; but they were either not actually printers or had careers that were so brief, or dependent on their association with more established individuals, as to be insignificant. Removing these, and counting several family teams as one, we find thirty-eight master printers at work and running their own shops in British North America up to the year 1740.² Of these, only four were at work before 1680, seven began work in 1681-90, three between 1691-1700, one between 1700-10, five between 1711-20, nine between 1721-30, and nine between 1731-40. Almost half, or eighteen,

2. These names and dates are based on information drawn from Charles Evans, *American Bibliography* (Chicago & Worcester, 1903-55), Clifford K. Shipton and James E. Mooney, *National Index of American Imprints through 1800* (Worcester, 1969), the North American Imprints Program (NAIP), the specialized state bibliographies, and Thomas's *History of Printing in America*. Benjamin Franklin V, *Boston Printers, Publishers, and Booksellers: 1640-1800* (Boston, 1980), and Charles F. Heartman, *Checklist of Printers in the United States from Stephen Daye to the Close of the War of Independence* (New York, 1915). Since Heartman is still frequently cited as the major source for this information, I record my exclusions from his list, and my basis for their exclusion: 1) Nicholas Boone, a publisher; 2) Francis Dewing, an engraver but not a printer; 3) James Glen, a journeyman who only worked for hire with Samuel Sewall; 4) Edward Hall, who issued a few joint imprints with William Parks in Annapolis in 1732-33; 5) Vavasour Harris, who acted briefly as publishing agent for his father in Boston in 1695; 6) Tiberius Johnson, who appears as printer on a few almanacs in Philadelphia, 1704-6, then disappears, and who was possibly the son of Reynier Jansen; 7) Hugh Meredith, a journeyman printer in Philadelphia, briefly Benjamin Franklin's partner before returning to farming; 8) Eleazar Phillips, Jr., a Boston bookseller, one of a number of bookselling family members in Boston, briefly established a press in Charleston, but died within a few months; 9) James Printer, an Indian who worked as a journeyman in both Cambridge and Boston and whose name appears in one joint imprint; 10) Joseph Reyners, whose name appears as printer on one Philadelphia, 1706, tract, who was possibly another son of Reynier Jansen; 11) Samuel Sewall, who was noted as publisher of the Boston press after John Foster's death but was not a printer; 12) Jacob Taylor, whose name appears on several small imprints in Philadelphia, 1708-12, but who is otherwise unknown; 13) George Webb, a journeyman printer in Philadelphia, who printed a few items in Charleston in 1731.

TABLE I
THIRTY-EIGHT MASTER-PRINTERS, 1639-1740

1639	Stephen & Matthew Daye	English
1649	Samuel Green, Sr.	American (G)
1660	Marmaduke Johnson	English
1675	John Foster	American
1681	Samuel Green, Jr.	American (G)
1684	Richard Pierce	American
1685	William & Dinah Nuthead	English
1685	William Bradford	English
1686	John Allen	English
1687	Benjamin Harris	English
1687	Bartholomew Green, Sr.	American (G)
1699	Reynier Jansen	Dutch
1700	Timothy Green	American (G)
1700	Thomas Reading	English
1708	Thomas Short	American (G)
1712	Thomas Fleet	English
1714	Thomas Crump	English?
1713	Andrew Bradford	American
1717	James Franklin	American w/ English training
1718	Samuel Kneeland	American (G)
1723	Samuel Keimer	English
1724	Bartholomew Green, Jr.	American (G)
1725	Peter Zenger	German
1726	William Parks	English
1726	Timothy Green II	American (G)
1726	John Draper	American (G)
1727	Gamiel Rogers	American (G)
1728	Benjamin Franklin	American w/ English training
1729	David Harry	American
1732	Thomas Whitmarsh	English
1733	Louis Timothy	French
1736	Bezoune Allen	American
1736	John Bushnell	American (G)
1738	Jonas Green	American (G)
1738	Christopher Sauer	German
1738	Anne Franklin	American
1738	Elizabeth Timothy	French
1740	David Fowle	American (G)

(G) indicates a Green family connection. The date given in the left-hand margin indicates the first known work by the printer as an independent master printer.

entered the business after 1722. That year there were four cities with printing in the British colonies, and eight printing shops: five in Boston and one each in New London, New York, and Philadelphia. The business of printing expanded rapidly in the last two decades, after a slow development for most of the century. By 1740, fifteen printing establishments were operating in nine cities as far south as Charleston.

The printers came from varied backgrounds, although they were mainly Anglo-Saxon men (the two women, Anne Franklin and Elizabeth Timothy, took over their deceased husbands' shops). Seventeen of the thirty-eight were born and trained in Europe and came to the colonies as printers; of these, twelve were English, two were French, two were German, and one was Dutch. Two others, the Franklin brothers, were American but received substantial parts of their training in London printing shops, experience that had a great impact on their careers. It has been estimated that a third of the printers active in America from 1700 to 1765 came from Europe.³ Significantly, most of these came before 1740. After the first century, the great majority of American printers were native-born.

These foreign printers introduced, or tried to introduce, formats of printing and genres of material to the American market. Benjamin Harris attempted the first newspaper in 1690. This proved a failure, but he transformed an English model into the *New England Primer*, which became a resounding success. Thomas Fleet, who arrived in Boston in 1712, popularized 'small books for children, and ballads,' according to Isaiah Thomas. These were a kind of English street literature that probably had been uncommon earlier in New England. James Franklin brought English ideas of lively journalism to his newspaper, the *New England Courant*, and they landed him in jail. Samuel Keimer of Philadelphia, although he may have been as foolish as Franklin portrayed him,

3. Stephen Botein, "Meer Mechanics" and an Open Press: The Business and Political Strategies of Colonial American Printers, *Perspectives in American History* 9 (1975): 127-225, 151. Biographical information and a chronology of the printers is drawn from the sources cited in the preceding footnote.

TABLE 2
 MASTER PRINTERS IN COLONIAL CITIES, 1639-1740

1660	1670	1680	1690	1700	1710	1720	1730	1740	
									<i>Cambridge</i>
									STEPHEN & MATTHEW DAYE (1639-49)
									SAMUEL GREEN, SR. (1649-92)
									MARMADUKE JOHNSON (1660-74)
									<i>Boston</i>
									JOHN FOSTER (1675-81)
									SAMUEL GREEN, JR. (1681-90)
									RICHARD PIERCE (1684-91)
									JOHN ALLEN (1686-1704, 1707-27)
									BARTHOLOMEW GREEN, SR. (1687-1733)
									BENJAMIN HARRIS (1687-94)
									TIMOTHY GREEN (1700-13)
									THOMAS FLEET (1712-)
									THOMAS CRUMP (1714-17)
									JAMES FRANKLIN (1717-27)
									SAMUEL KNEELAND (1718-)
									with TIMOTHY GREEN II (1726-)
									BARTHOLOMEW GREEN, JR. (1724-)
									with BEZOUNE ALLEN (1736-)
									and JOHN BUSHNELL (1736-)
									JOHN DRAPER (1726-)
									GAMALIEL ROGERS (1727-29, 1740-)
									with DANIEL FOWLE (1740-)

1660	1670	1680	1690	1700	1710	1720	1730	1740	
			┌───┐						<i>Maryland</i>
				┌───┐					WILLIAM & DINAH NUTHEAD (1685-95)
						┌──┐			THOMAS READING (1700-13)
							┌───┐		JOHN PETER ZENGER (1719-21)
							┌───┐		WILLIAM PARKS (1726-37)
							┌───┐	→	JONAS GREEN (1738-)
			┌───┐						<i>Philadelphia</i>
			┌───┐						WILLIAM BRADFORD (1685-93)
				┌───┐					REYNIER JANSEN (1699-1706)
						┌───┐		→	ANDREW BRADFORD (1713-)
							┌───┐		SAMUEL KEIMER (1723-29)
							┌───┐	→	BENJAMIN FRANKLIN (1728-)
							┌──┐		DAVID HARRY (1729-30)
							┌───┐	→	CHRISTOPHER SAUER (1738-)
									<i>New York</i>
				┌───┐				→	WILLIAM BRADFORD (1693-)
							┌───┐	→	JOHN PETER ZENGER (1725-)
									<i>New London</i>
					┌──┐				THOMAS SHORT (1708-12)
						┌───┐		→	TIMOTHY GREEN (1713-)
									<i>Newport</i>
							┌───┐	→	JAMES AND ANNE FRANKLIN (1727-)
									<i>Williamsburg</i>
							┌───┐	→	WILLIAM PARKS (1730-)
									<i>Charleston</i>
							┌──┐		THOMAS WHITMARSH (1732-33)
							┌───┐	→	LOUIS AND ELIZABETH TIMOTHY (1734-)

made serious efforts to republish current English books on his colonial press. And, of course, Christopher Sauer's introduction of a German printing establishment in 1738 added a wholly different cultural element to the American printing scene. All of the immigrant printers served as conduits of European ideas of printed products into the American marketplace.⁴

Of the American-born and trained printers, thirteen of the nineteen were connected to the ubiquitous Green family, descended from the Cambridge printer Samuel Green, Sr., and related by blood, marriage, or apprenticeship. The web of Green relationships provided the family with opportunities in government printing and cooperative ventures. By 1740 they ran the printing shops of Annapolis and New London, as well as four out of the five in Boston. The only interconnected group of printers that rivaled the Greens was the Franklin family, largely revolving around Benjamin's silent partnerships with former apprentices and with his brother James and James' widow Anne in Newport. Benjamin developed his network much more extensively after 1740. Finally, William Bradford and his son Andrew, with their New York-Philadelphia axis, were often able to get the printing contracts of colonies without presses, such as New Jersey and Maryland.⁵

The focus of much of American printing history has been biographical. Despite this, we know very little about many of the most interesting printers. The amount of material that determined research has yielded on some of the less important ones—I think particularly of J. G. Riewald's biography of Reynier Jansen—

4. Charles F. Heartman, *The New England Primer Issued Prior to 1830* (New York, 1916); Worthington C. Ford, 'Benjamin Harris, Printer and Bookseller,' *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society* 57 (1923): 34-68; Thomas, *History of Printing*, p. 94; Harold L. Dean, 'The *New England Courant*, 1721-1726: A Chapter in the History of American Culture' (Ph.D. diss., Brown University, 1942); C. Lennart Carlson, 'Samuel Keimer, a Study in the Transit of English Culture to Colonial Pennsylvania,' *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 61 (1937): 357-86.

5. Botein, 'Meer Mechanics,' pp. 152-57. The only American-born and trained printers prior to 1740 who were *not* Green-related were John Foster and his apprentice Richard Pierce; Andrew Bradford, and Bezoune Allen—who apprenticed with their fathers (although the latter went into partnership with a Green); David Harry; and Anne Franklin. William C. Kiessel, 'The Green Family, A Dynasty of Printers,' *New England Historical and Genealogical Register* 104 (1950): pp. 81-93.

encourages one to believe that such work devoted to a William Bradford or a Thomas Fleet would be very rewarding.⁶

In the first century of printing in America, the number of printing establishments was never great. The largest of the shops probably had three presses, and most had one or two. Compared to the great publishing center of London, to which the whole British Empire looked for printed matter, the output of the American colonies was small. This was true, though, of every locale of printing outside the metropolis. London was overwhelmingly dominant. Compared to other English provincial printing centers, however, the towns of Boston and Philadelphia, at least, were significant by the 1730s. One observer of the time called Boston the most important publishing town in the Empire after London.⁷

What was printed in the British colonies before 1740? Most of the product of the press fell into a narrow range in both content and format. The single largest group of material was government printing, including laws and proclamations. Sermons and theology were staples of the press, especially in New England, and almanacs were popular everywhere. Blank forms for business and law were a mainstay of job printing. Chapbooks and primers, as well as broadside advertisements and ballads, became more common in the early eighteenth century. The newspaper was almost nonexistent before 1719, but assumed great importance in the last two decades. There were scattered works of history, a few of literature, and some works of useful instruction in trades — but not very many. The more varied productions described by Wroth mostly appeared after 1740.⁸

The early printers produced, for the most part, only what could be more conveniently printed in the colonies than shipped from England. Laws, ephemera for local use, newspapers, and pam-

6. References to most of the existing biographies can be found in G. Thomas Tanselle, *A Guide to the Study of United States Imprints* (Cambridge, 1971). The best study of Bradford to date is Alexander J. Wall, Jr., 'William Bradford, Colonial Printer: A Tercentenary Review,' *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 73 (1963): 361–84. There is not even an article-length study of Thomas Fleet.

7. Daniel Neal, *The History of New England* (London, 1720).

8. Lawrence C. Wroth, *The Colonial Printer* (Portland, Maine, 1938), pp. 215–64.

phlets or small books fit the bill. Any large or lengthy work was far cheaper to produce in London, and law books were almost the only folios printed in the colonies before 1740. Works of literature were also cheaper to import, and the risk of being stuck with an unsalable edition, as Franklin seems to have been with his *Pamela*, was avoided. Virtually all works of instruction in trades or arts were imported, and the few American editions were reprints or pirated editions of English originals. The exhibition on view in the Hall, which attempts to show a broad variety of material, is not representative, and many of the more unusual items are 'firsts' of some kind, not examples of well-developed genres.⁹ Most printing in the first century stayed within well-defined limits of text and size, and it was only in the years following 1720 that the growth of the printing trade and its audience began to bring some diversity to the products of the press.

The first press in the British colonies in America was established in 1639. The Cambridge Press, like the Puritan press at Leyden before it, was begun to allow the publication of religious works without fear of interference from London. From the first it was firmly controlled by the ruling oligarchy and used for their ends. Many New England authors still published in England, however, and work for the Cambridge Press was scanty. There was scarcely enough work to sustain a full-time printer, and Samuel Green, who succeeded Stephen and Matthew Daye, was obliged to find other positions to support his vast family (nineteen children by two wives). Indeed, his son Samuel, although trained as a printer, abandoned the profession in despair and became a trader in New London, although he later returned to printing. The only job that kept the Cambridge Press busy in its early years, and which required the hiring of an experienced English printer, Marmaduke Johnson, was the printing of the Eliot Indian Bible. This massive and atypical job was almost an English publication, in the sense

9. William S. Reese, 'The Printers' First Fruits: An Exhibition of American Imprints, 1640-1742, from the Collections of the American Antiquarian Society,' *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 99 (1989): 41-88. This catalogue was also issued as a separate publication.

that it was entirely subsidized, including additional printing equipment, by the Corporation of the New England Company. However, like similar projects in the Spanish New World colonies, its American publication was necessitated by the location in the colonies of competent proofreaders of the Indian languages.¹⁰

After the Eliot Bible was completed, Marmaduke Johnson was eager to move to Boston. This logical move to the metropolis, where a bookselling community was already well developed, was blocked by the General Court until 1674, and then Johnson died before he could print anything. John Foster, a young Harvard graduate who was well known to the press licensers and generally esteemed for his ability as a 'Cunning Artificer,' became the first Boston printer. After Foster's untimely death in 1681, his press was put under the management of another member of the ruling elite, Samuel Sewall, who directed it until 1684, when Samuel Green, Jr., took charge. The same year, Richard Pierce, probably a former Foster apprentice, opened a printing shop. In 1686 the London printers John Allen and Benjamin Harris arrived on the scene, both having steered too close to the wrong political persuasion during the Duke of Monmouth's rebellion; their ventures to Massachusetts were probably prompted as much by self-preservation as expectations for a better market. It was forty-five years after the printing of the Bay Psalm Book before there was any real competition among printers in Massachusetts or a press in another colony.¹¹

The first important printing center outside of Massachusetts was Philadelphia, where William Bradford, according to his grand phrase, 'after Great Charge and Trouble . . . brought the great

10. The major study of the Cambridge Press is George Parker Winship's *The Cambridge Press, 1638-1692* (Philadelphia, 1945). See also Lawrence G. Starkey, 'A Descriptive and Analytical Bibliography of the Cambridge, Massachusetts, Press from Its Beginning to the Publication of Eliot's 'Indian Bible' in 1663' (Master's thesis, University of Virginia, 1949). George E. Littlefield, *The Early Massachusetts Press, 1638-1711*, 2 vols. (Boston, 1907), 2: 25-26. Printing was only permitted to begin at Lima, for instance, because it placed the printers near the proofreaders of tracts in Indian languages. Catholic efforts at publications in native American languages began as early as 1547.

11. Littlefield, *The Early Massachusetts Press*, vol. 1, pp. 259-62; vol. 2, pp. 25-66.; Samuel A. Green, *John Foster* (Boston, 1909).

Art and Mystery of Printing into this part of America.' Following several minor collisions with the authorities for printing works without a license, Bradford became embroiled in sectarian disputes by taking the side of George Keith in his quarrel with the Quaker oligarchy and ended up on trial for seditious libel in 1692. Bradford found it convenient to accept the invitation of Gov. Benjamin Fletcher of New York to become the official printer there in 1693, and he was not replaced until Reynier Jansen arrived in 1699. In the meantime, the other press in the Middle colonies, that of William and Dinah Nuthead in Maryland, failed after ten years of shadowy practice, from which only one broadside has survived.¹²

By the late 1680s, there were five master printers in Boston: Samuel Green, Jr., his brother Bartholomew, Richard Pierce, and the English printers Allen and Harris. This would suggest a lively printing trade, but such was not the case. There was scant work to keep them all busy, and not enough presses. A complicated pattern of joint imprints suggests that accommodation was reached through hire and partnerships. Samuel Green, Jr., died in 1690, Richard Pierce the following year. The Cambridge Press ended in 1692. Benjamin Harris returned to London in 1694. John Allen and Bartholomew Green went into partnership, making theirs the only printing establishment in Massachusetts until 1700.¹³ By 1698, the only two printing establishments in the country were theirs and Bradford's in New York. The American press was safely established, but its output over six decades was certainly not vast.

The governments of the American colonies showed little enthusiasm for printing in the seventeenth century. This lack of official interest in encouraging or allowing printing is hardly surprising. Printing in England was strictly controlled from the late sixteenth century until the Licensing Act lapsed in 1695.

12. Bradford's announcement of his printing is in *Kalendarium Pennsilvaniense* (Philadelphia, 1685); Alexander J. Wall, Jr., 'William Bradford.'

13. Biographies of these printers appear in Thomas, *History of Printing*, pp. 83-90, and Franklin, *Boston Printers, Publishers, and Booksellers*, pp. 235-38, 213-19, 412-14, 11-15, 277-81.

Moreover, printing was limited to London, York, and the two university towns of Oxford and Cambridge. The number of printers and the size of their shops was also regulated. Printing was distrusted by the authorities and considered likely to breed seditious libel. Sir William Berkeley, royal governor of Virginia in 1671, put it very plainly: 'I thank God,' he wrote, 'there are no free schools nor printing and I hope we shall not have these hundred years; for learning has brought disobedience, and heresy and sects into the world, and printing has divulged them. . . . God keep us from both.'¹⁴ Berkeley's famous diatribe was not an unusual attitude for the time. Certainly under the Stuarts there was little inclination to give the press free rein. The instructions of James II to Gov. Edmund Andros, typical of the language in instructions to royal governors through the 1730s, gave sweeping powers: 'And forasmuch as great inconvenience may arise by the liberty of printing within our said territory under your government you are to provide by all necessary orders that no person keep any printing-press for printing, nor that any book, pamphlet or other matters whatsoever be printed without your especial leave and license first obtained.'¹⁵ Under such circumstances, most towns and colonies were not going to get printers until the government wanted them. When the printer William Nuthead arrived in Virginia in 1682, he was quickly ejected by the successor of the ill-tempered Berkeley, Lord Culpepper. It is probably not happenstance that the first three colonies to allow printing were Massachusetts, which had a charter, and the two comparatively free-thinking proprietary colonies of Maryland and Pennsylvania. In the Caribbean, where the colonies were more important to English commerce in this period, no one thought it necessary to introduce a printing press until one was established in Jamaica in the 1720s. (The exact date is unknown.) A second press was not established there until David

14. Quoted in Lawrence C. Wroth, *A History of Printing in Colonial Maryland, 1686-1776* (Baltimore, 1922), p. 1.

15. Quoted in Clyde A. Duniway, *The Development of the Freedom of the Press in Massachusetts* (New York, 1906), p. 65.

Harry moved Samuel Keimer's press to Barbados from Philadelphia in 1730.¹⁶

The risk of discipline by the authorities was a constant possibility for all colonial printers. Licensing laws were in effect in Massachusetts from 1662 until the 1720s, and the various governors' instructions gave them de facto rights to assert licensing powers. Both governors and legislatures were quick to take offense at any publications they found disagreeable, and there were sporadic cases of persecution for seditious libel, beginning with William Bradford in 1692 and continuing until the Revolution. Clyde Duniway, Leonard Levy, Stephen Botein, and Robert Harlan have all discussed the question of freedom of the press and the colonial printers, and I will not pursue it here, except to say that the printers generally sought to avoid trouble by not giving offense.¹⁷

The importance of government printing contracts to the early printers has been emphasized by Lawrence Wroth and others. It was indeed crucial. Before the 1720s only Boston was able to support printers who did not have some kind of subsidy from either governor or legislature to do the official printing, and for the entire period it was the most lucrative single contract a printer could hope to have. The establishment of printing in every colony south of Massachusetts before the Revolution proceeded directly from subsidies offered by the governments. In the case of South Carolina, the equivalent of £175 sterling, more than the cost of the equipment of a printing establishment, was paid as a bonus to the printer who would set up shop there.¹⁸ Boston generated

16. Bradford F. Swan, *The Spread of Printing. Western Hemisphere. The Caribbean Area* (Amsterdam, 1970).

17. Duniway, *The Development of Freedom of the Press in Massachusetts*; Leonard W. Levy, *Emergence of a Free Press* (New York, 1985), chapters 1-5; Botein, "Meer Mechanics"; Robert D. Harlan, *The Colonial Printer: Two Views* (Los Angeles, 1978).

18. Wroth, *The Colonial Printer*, pp. 226-28; Botein, "Meer Mechanics," pp. 166-70. As important as the printing of laws was to colonial printers, they evidently did not produce enough copies, or work of sufficient quality, to fill the need in London. The royal printer John Basket produced the New York *Acts of Assembly* in 1719, the Maryland *Acts of Assembly* in 1723, and the Massachusetts *Acts and Laws* in 1724. See [Charles R. Hildeburn], *The Charlemagne Tower Collection of American Colonial Laws* (Philadelphia, 1890), and William H. Robinson, Ltd., *Catalogue 70. Books . . . Relating to America . . . including the Library of George Grenville* (London, 1940), items 130, 134, 135.

enough work from the 1670s to support printers who did not have the benefit of government subsidy. But Philadelphia and New York could not support a second printer until 1723 and 1725, respectively, and the first century ended before competition came from any other printing centers.

The beginning of the eighteenth century added several printers; Reynier Jansen moved from Holland to Philadelphia in 1699. Thomas Reading came from England to Maryland the following year, and Timothy Green, one of the youngest children of Samuel Green, the Cambridge printer, opened a second printing house in Boston in 1700. Jansen died in 1706, and the press under his sons' management produced only a few small imprints and was essentially defunct. Reading's shadowy operation in Annapolis from 1700 to 1713 left behind only a handful of laws and a few sermons; after his death there was no printing in Maryland, except for a brief foray by Zenger from New York in 1719–20, until 1726. Timothy Green was offered the job of official printer to Connecticut in 1708 but thought it safer to stay in Boston, noting that he was 'not willing to leave a certainty for an uncertainty.' Thomas Short, who probably learned printing as an apprentice of Bartholomew Green, took the job instead. Short was moved to New London, where he worked until his death in 1712. Timothy Green then reconsidered the position and took over, remaining the only printer in Connecticut until 1754.¹⁹ In all, little changed until about 1713, when the printing trade in British North America finally began a steady expansion after decades of starts and stops.

Boston led the way, and became the first city in the British colonies with a very well developed printing network. Bartholomew Green and John Allen split their partnership in 1704, and the arrival of the English printer Thomas Fleet in 1712 brought an energetic new figure to the scene and added diversity to the printed products of the town. In 1717 James Franklin, having served his

19. Wroth, *History of Printing in Colonial Maryland.*, pp. 17–37, 162–67; J. G. Riewald, *Reynier Jansen of Philadelphia: Early American Printer* (Gröningen, 1970); W. Deloss Love, *Thomas Short, the First Printer of Connecticut* (Hartford, 1901), pp. 11–13, 32.

apprenticeship in London, 'return'd from England with a Press and Letters to set up his Business,' according to his younger brother Benjamin. The following year Samuel Kneeland, grandson of Samuel Green, Sr., and trained by his uncle, Bartholomew Green, opened his own shop. By 1718 there were five printing establishments, a number that stayed more or less constant, allowing for changes in personnel, through 1740.²⁰

Philadelphia was the second center of American printing, remaining well behind Boston before 1740 but catching up before the Revolution. In 1713 Andrew Bradford permanently reestablished printing in the city his father had fled twenty years earlier, and he enjoyed a monopoly for the next decade. The second shop in town was that of Samuel Keimer, who arrived from England in 1723. On his heels came the youthful Benjamin Franklin, who fled the tyranny of apprenticeship to his brother James that fall. There is no better account of the world of the American colonial printer than Franklin's, and his depiction of his life as a journeyman in Philadelphia, interrupted by an educational year and one half in London, is particularly pungent. In 1729 Franklin went into business for himself (briefly in partnership with Hugh Meredith), and David Harry, another journeyman, bought out Keimer and moved his press to Barbados. Franklin and Andrew Bradford remained the only printers in Philadelphia until 1738, when Christopher Sauer established his German press at Germantown.²¹

New York was the exclusive domain of William Bradford from 1693 to 1725, when his apprentice, John Peter Zenger, went into competition with him after an unsuccessful attempt to set up a press in Maryland. In 1726 William Parks of Ludlow, England, became official printer in Annapolis, and in 1730 he opened a shop in Williamsburg as well. He ultimately gave up his Annapolis

20. Franklin, *Boston Printers, Publishers, and Booksellers*, pp. 162-70, 193-96, 323-29; Benjamin Franklin, *Autobiography* (New York, 1944), p. 17.

21. Franklin, *Autobiography*, pp. 32-77; Anna Janney DeArmand, *Andrew Bradford, Colonial Journalist* (Newark, 1949), pp. 7-38; C. William Miller, *Benjamin Franklin's Philadelphia Printing* (Philadelphia, 1974); Stephen Bloore, 'Samuel Keimer,' *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 54 (1930): 255-87.

operation, and Jonas Green became the Maryland printer in 1738. James Franklin, tired of the factional disputes he encountered in Boston, moved to Newport in 1727; after his death, his wife Anne continued the business. Finally, in 1731-33, three printers responded to the bounty offered by South Carolina to found a press. Eleazar Phillips and Thomas Whitmarsh quickly succumbed to the climate, while a third, George Webb, printed only a few items and disappeared. Louis Timothy, like Whitmarsh an employee of Benjamin Franklin and working with Franklin as a silent partner, became the sole printer in 1734. When he died in 1738 his widow Elizabeth took over the press with her young son.²²

The very slow evolution of the press gave way to rapid expansion in the 1720s and 1730s, and the printing trade's real growth dates from that time, with Boston taking off slightly earlier. In the last two decades of the first century, the press expanded and diversified more than in the preceding eighty years. Various factors contributed to this. The first was the geographical spread of printing through the colonies, as more local governments found it desirable to have presses. The second was the evolution of the three main cities of Boston, Philadelphia, and New York. In Boston, the growth of the book trade probably aided the printer's expansion. And, throughout the colonies, the development of newspapers was an important factor. Underlying all this was a growing public appetite for the printed word. How much of this increased demand was caused by the expansion of the colonial scene and how much was due to a shift from an oral society to a print-oriented society, I will leave to students of literacy and readership. However, an accelerating rate of literacy must have played a part. The enhanced appetite for instruction and entertainment through the printed word led to an increasingly secular output from the press and a diversity of printed material, with an emphasis on the practical. The two terminal points of the current exhibition, the Bay Psalm Book and the first American cookbook, provide a metaphor for

22. Wroth, *The Colonial Printer*, pp. 12-47; Lawrence C. Wroth, *William Parks, Printer and Journalist of England and Colonial America* (Richmond, 1926).

this passage from the sacred to the utilitarian in the output of American presses.

The advent of newspapers as a vital part of the livelihood of the colonial printer played a major role in the changing circumstances of the press. Benjamin Harris attempted a newsletter in Boston in 1690, but his sheet, *Publick Occurrences*, was swiftly suppressed after one issue, and it was not until 1704 that a serially published newspaper, the *Boston News-letter*, appeared. The officially sanctioned *News-letter*, published by the postmaster of Boston, John Campbell, and printed by the official printer Bartholomew Green, remained the only paper until 1719. It differed from most of the papers that followed in its quasi-official nature and in maintaining the publisher-printer relationship typical of other aspects of Boston publishing, although Green became sole proprietor in 1722, when Campbell retired.

The year 1719 marked the beginning of a surge in newspapering. Competition came to Boston with the *Gazette*, and journalism arrived in Philadelphia with Andrew Bradford's *American Weekly Mercury*. In 1721 James Franklin's *New England Courant* added a highly controversial weekly, the third in Boston. William Bradford started the *New York Gazette* in 1727, bringing the total to five in the colonies. From then until 1740 the newspaper press more than doubled to twelve, with five papers in Boston, three in Philadelphia (counting Sauer's Germantown paper), two in New York, and one each in Williamsburg and Charleston. Ten of these were published by the printers. In other words, two-thirds of the printers were also newspaper publishers by 1740. The only exceptions were two of the Boston papers, the *Gazette* and the *Post-Boy*, published by the former and present postmasters of the town, and these were the weakest of the city's five.²³

Few accurate figures are available on the profitability of the newspapers of this period, but the enthusiasm the printers felt for

23. Sidney Kobre, *The Development of the Colonial Newspaper* (Pittsburgh, 1944), pp. 13-51; Edward C. Lathem, comp., *Chronological Tables of American Newspapers, 1690-1820* (Barre, Mass., 1972).

them would suggest that they were lucrative in terms of both money and prestige, despite uncertain circulation and subscription payments. At a somewhat later period the partnership of Benjamin Franklin and James Hall drew 60 percent of its profits from the subscriptions and advertising revenues of the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, making it their most reliable source of income. For the printers with government contracts, newspapers provided revenue that made them less vulnerable to official whim. For the others, newspapers offered a new degree of financial independence and steady work. Stephen Botein has pointed out the role that newspapers played in allowing the printers of Boston to overcome the power of the booksellers there—an ability purely economic in its base. More than any other single factor, the newspaper contributed to the growth of printing in the 1720s and 1730s, and provided the printers with economic stability and even prosperity.²⁴

Up to 1740, Boston was the largest city in British North America and the leading city in printing and the book trade. Notably, Boston had developed a significant book trade before any printers worked there. Unlike any other colony, the market in Boston developed as a replica of the London trade, with booksellers acting both as general vendors of books and as publishers, assuming the risk of publication in the expectation of profit. As early as 1647 Hezekiah Usher acted as publisher to an almanac printed at Cambridge. His son John was publisher of Morton's *New-England's Memorial*, and in 1672 he was granted the first American copyright, which gave him the sole privilege of publishing the Massachusetts laws printed that year. Usher's publishing was not limited to America, for in the same year he acted as one of the publishers of John Davenport's *The Power of Congregational Churches Asserted*, printed in London. Richard Chiswell, a London bookseller with many American contacts, had the book issued with two different imprints, 'Printed in the Year 1672,' for English distribution, and

24. Botein, 'Meer Mechanics,' pp. 146-50. After 1740 there was little expansion of newspapers for the next fifteen years; there were only thirteen in 1755. By 1760 there were seventeen; 1765 offered twenty-four; and by 1775 there were forty-eight.

'Printed for Rich. Chiswell, and to be sold by John Usher of Boston in New-England, 1672,' for American distribution.²⁵

London was the center of the English book world, the source for virtually all supplies and books flowing to the American colonies. It was also a leading center for publication by Americans, even if, like Davenport, they hoped to have their works distributed on both sides of the Atlantic. Many recognized that to have an impact on English thought, it was necessary to be read in England. Ministers from the first generation of Puritans in America, like John Cotton or Thomas Hooker, were published almost entirely in London. Even with a press readily available, Increase Mather published fifteen of his 102 works in England first, and another thirteen originally printed in America were republished there, including *An Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences*. In this case, the American sheets were reissued in London with a cancel title page bearing a London bookseller's imprint. Twenty of Cotton Mather's books were first published on British presses, and twenty-five more were reprinted there. Of course, he turned to London for publication of his most important book, the *Magnalia Christi Americana*, a work that would have strained the capacity of any printer in America at the time.²⁶ A number of English booksellers had close ties to the American colonies and were frequently involved in American publications, including such men as Richard Chiswell and Thomas Parkhurst, or two who had been in New England and returned, the bookseller John Dunton and the printer-bookseller Benjamin Harris.²⁷

Besides these publishing exchanges, the booksellers on both sides must have been the leading cause for the influx of books from England to Boston. While our sources for bookselling information

25. George E. Littlefield, *Early Boston Booksellers* (Boston, 1900), pp. 65-82. See Sabin 18708 for details of the Davenport book.

26. Figures are based on an analysis of Thomas J. Holmes, *Increase Mather, a Bibliography* (Cleveland, 1931), and Thomas J. Holmes, *Cotton Mather, a Bibliography* (Cambridge, Mass., 1940).

27. For the transatlantic careers of Dunton and Harris, see Stephen Parks, *John Dunton and the English Book Trade: A Study of His Career* (New York, 1976), and Ford, 'Benjamin Harris,' pp. 34-68.

before 1740 are scant, it is possible to identify more and more books of American provenance up to that date. The recent work of Edwin Wolf II on the books available in colonial Philadelphia demonstrates what a rich tapestry can be woven from disparate sources to document the book resources of an American colonial city. Such a work on colonial Boston would be invaluable to students of the history of the book and printing. As the true extent and scale of book importation becomes better known, the history of printing in the British colonies will become clearer as well.²⁸

In Boston, the booksellers seem to have controlled the printed word more than the printers. John Dunton, the British bookseller, who had enough American trade in 1686 to be owed £500 there, did a brisk further business when he came over with a large stock of books that year. He described John Usher as a man who 'makes the best Figure in Boston, he's very rich, adventures much at Sea; but has got his Estate by BOOKSELLING,' and gave pointed portraits of the other booksellers, to whom he reckoned he was as welcome as 'sowr ale.' Dunton describes a prosperous and well-developed trade and an eager group of customers. Early eighteenth-century Boston continued to have a strong community of publisher-booksellers, with such men as Nicholas Boone, Benjamin Eliot, Samuel Gerrish, and Daniel Henschman being responsible for the majority of books and pamphlets published there. In Boston, at least through 1740, the booksellers were the main initiators of ventures and the primary beneficiaries of publishing projects.²⁹

28. Edwin Wolf II, *The Book Culture of a Colonial American City, Philadelphia Books, Bookmen, and Booksellers* (Oxford, 1988). See Worthington C. Ford, *The Boston Book Market, 1679-1700*, for one of the few available collections of booksellers' correspondence. An interesting study of the availability of a text in early America—a post-hole approach to this kind of research—is Charles Heventhal, Jr., 'Richard Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* in Early America,' *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 63 (1969): 157-75. Over fifty years ago, Samuel Eliot Morison called for a study of books owned in the colonies, but scholarly response has been slow.

29. John Dunton describes his visit to America in his work *The Life and Errors of John Dunton* (London, 1705), pp. 123-93. See Franklin, *Boston Printers, Publishers, and Booksellers*, for biographies of both of these publishers and Boston printers; Rollo G. Silver, 'Publishing in Boston, 1726-57: The Accounts of Daniel Henschman,' *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 66 (1956): 17-36. For a discussion of the literature of early book distri-

It may well have been the replication of the London bookseller-printer relationship in Boston that led to the publication of so many sermons there. Obtaining copy and turning it into a salable commodity was vital for the booksellers to make a profit. The leading ministers of Boston, especially the Mathers, provided a ready source. George Selement has documented how the vast majority of publications by Puritan ministers were written by a small, prolific group with urban parishes, the ministers most likely to have close contacts with the booksellers. In some cases, the published texts were based on notes taken by parishioners and reviewed only briefly by the ministers. Sermons were popular literature, closely linked to familiar oral modes of communication and entertainment, and their publication must have been good business. In the case of his 1706 sermon on the safe return of the Reverend John Williams from Indian captivity, *Good Fetched Out of Evil*, Cotton Mather recorded, 'I gave this Collection to the Bookseller, that it may be published . . . in a weeks time, he sold off a Thousand of the Impression.' It is not surprising that the booksellers were indulgent of Mather's almost embarrassing lust to publish. So dominant were the two Mathers in supplying copy to the Boston press from 1675 to 1728 that one wonders what would have been published without them. If the booksellers were to make a profit, a constant supply of fresh text was an absolute necessity.³⁰ The number of sermons printed in early New England may be both a reflection of the organization of the Boston booksellers and of the reading habits of their customers. It is possible that the readers were simply fed what was easiest to put in print.

The printers of Boston had both the advantages and disadvantages of the bookseller system. The enterprise of the booksellers must have generated business for the printers by providing capital and marketing. On the other hand, it kept them on the level of

bution in America, see James Gilreath, 'American Book Distribution,' *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 95 (1985): 501-83.

30. Holmes, *Cotton Mather*, entry 150; George Selement, 'Publication and the Puritan Minister,' *William & Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 37 (1986): 219-41.

hired hands. They suffered the same inability to rise in the world that the printers of London felt. There was a gap between the booksellers and printers that was almost impossible to cross in England. The situation in Boston was more fluid, but the influence of the booksellers was both a boon and a restraint.

Outside the city of Boston before 1740, the printers were generally the booksellers. Unlike the Boston booksellers, they were not merchants but craftsmen seeking to supplement their income and distribute their own productions. For the most part, this tended to discourage a wide variety of printing. A tradesman of limited capital such as a printer was likely to stick to what was safe and sure, doing governmental or job work and not indulging in ventures of his own. Almanacs, certain sellers, were the exception. But printers like Samuel Keimer who attempted to promote their own reprints of English works could find a wrong choice of title expensive, even fatal, to their livelihood.

The situation of the printers south of Boston, if difficult, also offered great possibilities. The man who saw this clearly, and who was economically the most successful printer of his period in America, was Benjamin Franklin. Apprenticed to his brother, a printer trained in England, and later a journeyman in London for a year and one half himself, Franklin was well aware that the money was made in the publishing business by the booksellers, not by the printers. It is not surprising that Franklin's closest associate in the English trade was William Strahan, a man who made the very difficult step from printer to bookseller in the closed world of London booksellers. After Franklin became master of his own shop in Philadelphia, his strategy as a printer and publisher often centered on control of distribution. Beginning in South Carolina in 1732, he set former employees up as printers, remaining a silent partner in their business and marketing publications through them. By 1742 he was selling *Poor Richard* via partnerships with Elizabeth Timothy in Charleston and James Parker in New York, his brother's widow Anne Franklin in Newport, his former jour-

neyman Jonas Green in Annapolis, and his friend Thomas Fleet in Boston.³¹

The way to wealth lay in controlling the product of the press. In addition to widespread marketing, Franklin also realized the opportunity that the newspaper presented to the colonial printer. The revenues of the *Pennsylvania Gazette* became the mainstay of his business. Whether other printers did as well with their papers is difficult to determine, but the alacrity with which they embraced journalism suggests that it was worthwhile. The cash flow and income provided by a paper made printers more secure; it was a marketable product they could use to improve their situation. The scale of business in America was only a fraction of the London trade, but its structures were not as rigid. By the end of the eighteenth century, Isaiah Thomas followed a path similar to Franklin's to become one of the richest men in the United States.

For students of early printing in the British colonies, the completion of the pre-1801 section of the North American Imprints Program raises two vital questions: how many of the surviving imprints are recorded, and are there significant groups that have been missed?; and what amount and what kind of imprints are irrevocably lost? I think that for the period 1639 to 1740 we can feel confident that an example of virtually every surviving item of significance printed in the colonies has been found and recorded. Certainly a few more hitherto unknown items will turn up, and many variants between copies wait to be detected on closer bibliographical examination. More copies of known imprints will be located. But little that has survived has escaped detection by bibliographers.

Through 1740, Evans recorded 4,662 items, and Bristol added another 1,122 for a total of 5,784. Because NAIP does not include items for which no copies are located, or some of the printed forms included by Bristol, or Evans entries for newspapers, it has perhaps 20 percent fewer imprints listed. The number of items not in

31. Carl Van Doren, *Benjamin Franklin* (New York, 1938), pp. 47-124.

Evans, Bristol, or one of the local imprints bibliographies and new in NAIP is quite small.

Four extremely thorough imprints bibliographies have been published since Roger Bristol's *Supplement* to Evans appeared in 1970. They add only a handful of actual imprints to the pre-1740 group. C. William Miller's bibliography of Franklin imprints added thirteen blank forms of various sorts, an engraved book-plate, and a previously unnoticed second edition of the 1736 *Poor Richard*. Hazel A. Johnson's checklist of New London imprints, while inferring the printing of eighty-five broadsides and two sermons of which no copy had been seen or previously recorded, was only able to add three broadsides, a sermon, and six session laws. Christopher Gould and Richard P. Morgan's South Carolina imprints bibliography included ten inferential imprints, four of them dubious, but it added no new items. And Susan S. Berg's work on Williamsburg imprints adds only an entry for a printed title page attached to a manuscript, creating a hypothetical entry. Despite the painstaking work of these bibliographers, they record very little that is new, and it is all ephemeral.³²

Three significant caches of early imprints have appeared on the market in the last twenty years: a group of five broadsides from the Cambridge and Boston presses, 1677-82; three Massachusetts proclamations, 1696-99; and eleven broadsides and pamphlets from New York in 1693. Of these nineteen pieces, eight were previously recorded from other copies. Ten of the eleven completely new items were broadsides, and the eleventh was a four-page folded sheet. What additions there may be in years to come will probably be in the form of broadsides or ephemeral pieces, discovered singly or in small groups.³³

The question of what has been lost is much harder to answer.

32. Miller, *Franklin's Philadelphia Printing*; Hazel A. Johnson, *A Checklist of New London, Connecticut, Imprints, 1709-1800* (Charlottesville, 1978); Christopher Gould and Richard P. Morgan, *South Carolina Imprints, a Descriptive Bibliography* (Santa Barbara, 1985); and Susan S. Berg, *Eighteenth-Century Williamsburg Imprints* (New York, 1986).

33. William S. Reese, 'Nine Massachusetts Broad-sides, 1677-1699,' *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 93 (1983): 197-218; William S. Reese, 'The Bradford Imprints,' *New-York Historical Society Quarterly* 63 (1979): 54-68.

Official printing, especially of broadsides, has often left a record in another form. Johnson based her citations of inferential Connecticut broadside proclamations on the recorded orders to publish in the colony's records, and Worthington Ford similarly inferred Massachusetts proclamations from newspaper printings. Quite often, due to its official nature, a text has been preserved in some form, even if a broadside printing no longer exists. Early session laws can also be inferred from gaps in sequence; similar but less reliable assumptions have been made about almanacs. Where we really are reduced to guesswork is in the vast submerged body of ephemera and street literature: ballads, sale posters, theater announcements, personal declarations, advertisements, dying words of criminals, elegies and amateur poetics, political statements, and accounts of extraordinary events. Virtually all of this material from the first century of printing has disappeared, mostly through contemporary usage or through loss in fires and paper drives over two centuries, until the rare survivors are the only clues we have to the nature of a much larger body of once extant material.³⁴

The prolific Boston printer Thomas Fleet was particularly noted by Isaiah Thomas as a printer of ephemeral material, 'small books for children, and ballads. He made a profit on these, which was sufficient to support his family reputably.' What has survived of Fleet's broadside production? Out of 347 records in NAIP for his career from 1712 to 1758, only twenty-one are broadsides. The survival rate of his early work is even less: of 153 records between 1712 and 1730, only six are broadsides. As for children's books, Welch records only one inferential piece, based on a 1751 news-

34. Worthington C. Ford, *Broadsides, Ballads, &c. Printed in Massachusetts, 1639-1800* (Boston, 1922). For an excellent discussion of lost ephemera, see Georgia B. Bumgardner, 'Vignettes of the Past: American Historical Broadsides through the War of 1812,' *Printing History* 7/8 (1982): 37-48. Even knowledgeable persons are sometimes unaware of the scarcity of such ephemera as blank forms from the early period. The American Antiquarian Society has only a few pre-1700 examples, although late eighteenth-century ones are common. Nonetheless, Clifford Shipton claimed, 'An hour spent in any collection of the manuscripts of a merchant will produce many printed forms and trade cards not described in any bibliography.' Where is that collection for pre-1740 material?

paper advertisement.³⁵ The surviving examples of this fragile form of printing that we have from the Evans period are mostly from the post-Revolutionary period with very little stemming from before 1740. This obvious loss should make students of readership very wary of basing assumptions about what was printed in the colonies on the NAIP record alone.

How much is lost? Lawrence Wroth, using as his basis the Franklin and Hall Work Book entries for 1765, estimated that for every imprint of which a copy survives, 3.7 have been lost. Based on this, Wroth suggests that a total of 169,000 items were printed before 1801. This misleading interpretation has been frequently cited. The great majority of unlocated Franklin-Hall imprints listed in the Work Book are the most ephemeral of items, such as tickets, bills of lading, letterheads, and the like—items of no textual significance, and a level of job printing uniformly excluded by imprints bibliographers, including Wroth. If the figures taken from Franklin and Hall were applied to books, pamphlets, or broadsides with a message (as opposed to blank forms), the ratio would be much lower. On the other hand, there is probably a higher rate of loss for pre-1740 material. George Parker Winship suggests for the Cambridge Press a ratio of one item lost to each found, excluding blank forms. The Cambridge Press probably produced little in the way of ephemera, however. I am inclined to place the ratio of loss somewhere between Wroth and Winship, perhaps two items lost for each imprint surviving from the pre-1740 period, with the vast majority of the loss being single-sheet items. Some of these we can identify, but about many of the most interesting, alas, we can only speculate.³⁶

As much as we have lost of the output of the early American press, we have also preserved a great deal. If it were not for a group of determined collectors in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries,

35. I am indebted to Alan Degutis for these figures from NAIP records. d'Alté A. Welch, *A Bibliography of American Children's Books Printed Prior to 1821* (Worcester, 1972), entry 492.5.

36. Wroth, *The Colonial Printer*, pp. 215–24.

we would probably have far fewer extant imprints now. The collector's story is intimately connected with the survival of the printed record of the British colonies.

The first systematic collector of American imprints was the Reverend Thomas Prince of Boston's South Church. Before him, both Increase and Cotton Mather had undoubtedly acquired many Cambridge and Boston imprints, if only because they had written them. The Mather library before its dissolution must have contained a good deal more than the impressive surviving fragments, largely found today at the American Antiquarian Society. The Mathers were more concerned with theological content than imprint.³⁷ Prince, on the other hand, specifically pursued American imprints as part of his larger design for a 'New England Library.'

Thomas Prince seems to have been a born book collector. One book survives signed and dated by him in 1697, when he was ten, and he describes at length in his *Chronological History* his early reading on the history of Massachusetts, beginning with Morton's *New-England's Memorial* and including exclusively American imprints excepting Mather's *Magnalia*. Prince's desire to form a book collection became fixed upon his entering Harvard and reading an account of the Cottonian Library, 'which excited in me a zeal of laying hold on every Book, Pamphlet, and Paper, both in Print and Manuscript, which are either written by persons who lived here, or that have any Tendency to enlighten our History.' The bookplate of the New England Library specifically gives the date of Prince's entering Harvard, July 6, 1703, as the foundation of his collection. After graduation and two years of further study in Cambridge, he spent eight years in England before being recalled to the ministry of South Church in 1717. By 1736, when his *Chronological History* of New England was published, he could report 'having amassed above a Thousand books, pamphlets, and Papers of this Kind in print.'³⁸

37. J. H. Tuttle, 'The Libraries of the Mathers,' *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 20 (1910): 269-356; see Donald C. Dickinson, *Dictionary of American Book Collectors* (New York, 1986), pp. 221-22.

38. Thomas Prince, preface to *A Chronological History of New-England in the Form of*

When Prince died in 1758 he left the New England Library to the South Church, to be housed in a chamber in the steeple. The collection certainly suffered some loss during the British occupation of Boston in the winter of 1775–76, and books not originally from Prince's library were added in subsequent moves. It was not until 1866 that the library was placed under the care of the Boston Public Library, and a definitive catalogue was prepared of what was then extant, listing 1,528 books in the American section. The better part of these were American imprints predating Prince's death. Because of the vicissitudes that the Prince collection underwent in the century between his death and their safe deposit, it is impossible to say exactly what may have been subtracted or added in the interim.³⁹

The next collector after Prince to amass an important collection of early imprints was Thomas Wallcut of Boston, whose professional life was spent as a clerk in the office of the secretary of state of Massachusetts. This seems to have left him ample time to visit book shops and attend auctions, and from the Mather Byles sale of 1790 onward he was a persistent buyer, particularly of pamphlets. In 1834 he gave the great accumulation of his American material, some 10,000 items, to the American Antiquarian Society. Christopher Columbus Baldwin, the Society's librarian who packed the collection in sweltering summer heat for the trip to Worcester, ultimately tallied 4,476 pounds of books. Some remnant of the Wallcut library went to the Massachusetts Historical Society upon his death in 1840.⁴⁰

The Massachusetts Historical Society, begun in 1791, was the first such organization formed in the United States, and Wallcut was among its founders. The society's real moving force, however,

Annals. This was printed in Boston by Kneeland and Green for S. Gerrish, in 1736; William H. Whitmore, *Catalogue of the American Portion of the Library of the Rev. Thomas Prince, with a Memoir* (Boston, 1868).

39. *The Prince Library. A Catalogue of the Collection . . . Now Deposited in the Public Library of the City of Boston.* The preface is by the librarian, Justin Winsor. Edwin Wolf II, 'Great American Book Collectors to 1800,' *Gazette of the Grolier Club*, n.s., 16 (1971): 1–25.

40. Wolf, 'Great American Book Collectors.'

was Rev. Jeremy Belknap, an energetic historian whose *History of New Hampshire* was published in 1784 and 1792. Belknap understood the necessity of gathering historical materials while they were available, and the 'preservation of books, pamphlets, manuscripts and records' was foremost in the aims of the society. Having made such a declaration, Belknap was not one to wait idly by for results. He appreciated what could be done with such an organization. As he wrote to Ebenezer Hazard, 'There is nothing like having a *good repository*, and keeping a *good lookout*, not waiting at home for things to fall into the lap, but prowling around like a wolf for the prey.' A survey of the early imprints at the society reveals how many of the important pieces were received during the early years of this lupine activity. Before 1800 the Society acquired an Eliot Bible, Thomas Thacher's smallpox broadside of 1677, and many other important imprints.⁴¹

The fourth and most important collector of early American imprints to begin in the eighteenth century was Isaiah Thomas. No exact date can be attached to the origin of his interest in the early printing of the colonies, but by 1791 he was buying imprints and newspaper runs, and in 1792 he was investigating the history of the Stephen Daye press. The pressure of his publishing concerns, at their height in the 1790s, must have kept him occupied until near the end of the century, when he sold or withdrew from many of his business interests. After 1802 Thomas devoted himself mainly to collecting and research, writing *The History of Printing in America* between 1808 and 1810, and founding the American Antiquarian Society in 1812. Thomas gave his historical library to the Society in 1813, and immediately began to supplement it, buying the remainder of the Mather library from Hannah Mather Crocker in the following year for \$800. When the first Antiquarian

41. Walter Muir Whitehill, *Independent Historical Societies* (Boston, 1962), pp. 7-9; *Collecting for Clío: An Exhibition of Representative Materials from the Holdings of the Massachusetts Historical Society* (Boston, 1969); see especially items 17, 20, 22, 24, 31, 35, 37, 40, and 49; Samuel A. Green, *A List of Early American Imprints Belonging to the Library of the Massachusetts Historical Society* (Cambridge, Mass., 1895).

Hall opened in 1820, the library amounted to seven thousand volumes.⁴² By the time Thomas died in 1831, it was firmly established.

The pioneering collectors, and indeed many of the nineteenth-century collectors, were keenly aware that the materials that they sought were disappearing almost in front of their eyes. Given the concentration of printed material in cities during colonial times, the toll taken by the inevitable urban fires, starting with the Boston fire of 1711, which destroyed most of the booksellers' shops in the city, must have been severe. The ravages of the Revolution, which saw the occupation and at least partial plundering of Boston, Newport, Philadelphia, and Charleston and the burning of much of New York, were also considerable. Old paper was actively recycled, and little value was attached to most of the early imprints. Low commercial value contributed to the willingness of individuals to give items to the early institutions, but it also meant that there were few knowledgeable people to rescue material from destruction. Wholesale pulping continued through the Civil War. By the 1870s, especially as the Centennial generated a new sense of national history and a competitive marketplace developed, the rate of loss probably slowed, but more ephemeral and then less-valuable material remained, and to some extent still remains, vulnerable.

This history of destruction is important to bear in mind when considering what now survives from the first century of printing and, indeed, the whole period covered by Evans's bibliography. Survival in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries depended upon material reaching a safe depository, whether that was the files of the Public Record Office in London, the comparative oblivion of the steeple of Old South Church, or the collections of the newly formed societies. The more ephemeral an item, the more likely its loss outside an institution. The number of seventeenth-century broadsides, most of them unique, that entered the holdings of the Massachusetts Historical Society before 1820, illustrates a segment of the printed record that would have disap-

42. Clifford K. Shipton, *Isaiah Thomas* (Rochester, 1948), pp. 73-85.

peared otherwise. However, even the omnivorous assemblers like Prince, Wallcut, Belknap, and Thomas were more interested in books than in single-sheet items, and they were too close to the period to value ephemera like sale posters, any more than we would treasure the xeroxed notices that festoon lampposts now.

The year 1845 was a pivotal one in Americana collecting. In that year, the three individuals who are most closely identified with Americana book collecting in the nineteenth century—John Carter Brown, James Lenox, and George Brinley—began to seriously develop their collections. Brown and Lenox were primarily collectors of travels, voyages, and early European Americana. Both had some interest in American imprints, but it was overshadowed by other areas of interest and, indeed, their general outlook. They were gentlemen collectors in the English tradition of Thomas Dibdin, mixing their Americana with such purely bibliophilic pursuits as editions of the Bible and incunabula. They wished their books to be beautiful physical objects as well as interesting rarities, and here, of course, few early American imprints filled the bill unaltered.⁴³

George Brinley's approach to collecting was much more in the tradition of the great accumulators like Wallcut and Thomas. He began in 1845 by purchasing the American Indian collection of the Boston bookseller and antiquary Samuel G. Drake and quickly expanded his interests to include any early American imprints or local history. Although a man of some means, he was not wealthy on the scale of Brown or Lenox, and in the 1850s he seems to have collected mainly in New England, 'going directly to the source in the attic [and] the cellar,' as Randolph Adams put it. During the Civil War, when prices for scrap paper reached unprecedented heights, Brinley made arrangements with Hartford paper dealers to allow him to review mounds of scrap paper about to be pulped. Here is literally a vision of the collector snatching material from

43. William S. Reese, 'Winnowers of the Past: The Americanist Tradition in the Nineteenth Century' (unpublished seminar thesis, Yale University, 1977), pp. 58–83. Copies are available at the American Antiquarian Society and the Grolier Club in New York City.

the jaws of destruction; family legend has it that Brinley hauled an Eliot Bible from one of the piles.

The primary agent for Brown and Lenox was the bookseller Henry Stevens, who moved to London permanently in 1845 and quickly became the major dealer in Americana. As time went by, Brinley dealt with Stevens more frequently, and by the Civil War had become his best customer. His status was confirmed by the purchase of a Bay Psalm Book in 1864. He wrote Stevens a memorable letter in ordering it: 'When I last had the pleasure of seeing you here you said you would sell me your Bay Psalm Book for One thousand dollars (our currency, ie Greenbacks). If you are of the same mind now I will pay the money to your order on rec[eip]t of the dirty little book — upon condition that the transaction is strictly private.' The Psalm Book was a prelude to the purchase in 1868 of a collection of 275 volumes by Increase and Cotton Mather, a group Stevens had amassed over several decades and offered unsuccessfully to both Brown and Lenox. Brinley continued buying American imprints at a brisk pace until his death in 1875.⁴⁴

I mentioned earlier the tastes of Brown and Lenox for physically beautiful books, and in this they were joined by most of the collectors of the nineteenth century, and certainly by booksellers like Henry Stevens. Since many pieces of Americana and virtually every early imprint were relatively poor examples of typography, generally in plain drab calf bindings, the booksellers and collectors altered their appearance according to their own tastes. Volumes were washed, pressed, and rebound in full morocco. Stevens stripped the original bindings off the two Bay Psalm Books that he handled in his career and replaced them with sumptuous productions by noted English binders like Riviere and Bedford. Nor did the alteration stop there. The casualness with which books were 'sophisticated' is amazing when considered today. In Brin-

44. For Brinley's career, see Randolph G. Adams, *Three Americanists* (Philadelphia, 1945), pp. 35-67; Marcus A. McCorison, 'George Brinley, Americanist,' *Gazette of the Grolier Club*, n.s., 32 (1980): 4-23; William S. Reese, 'George Brinley and His Library,' *Gazette of the Grolier Club*, n.s., 32 (1980): 24-39; and Henry Stevens, *Recollections of Mr. James Lenox and the Formation of His Library*, rev. ed. (New York, 1951), pp. 44-49, 117-21.

ley's sale catalogue, one lot contained two imperfect copies of Increase Mather's *Wo to Drunkards* with a note to the effect that the fragments and a little facsimile work would make the pieces into one nice copy. John Russell Bartlett did just that, and the finished product is now in the John Carter Brown Library.

Other repairs called into practice all the ability of the skilled British restorers. Francis Bedford wrote to Brinley at one point, 'I cannot but confess that the more I practice upon these early American printed books, the more I am compelled to consider their dilapidated state and condition. Some are nearly past my art of restoration and repair . . . they are so perished, dilapidated and grubby they will not yield to cleaning.' Brinley was saved the trouble of such correspondence in the case of the Stevens Mather collection—every volume had been perfected, washed, and encased in morocco.⁴⁵ The moral of this, for bibliographers, is clear: deciphering the physical package left by the preservers of the book may be the most difficult part of describing it accurately. The sophistication of these books was standard practice for almost a century and still goes on—so caveat collector!

The physical alteration of books is not only an issue of collation. One argument for the necessity of using original sources is the notion that the ethos of the original artifact lends an immediacy to our understanding of the text. We handle and observe first-hand the aesthetic of a place and time, and if it is unaltered, it tells us something about that place and time, as a text in its own right. The nineteenth- and early twentieth-century collectors transformed the physical books into icons and dressed the modest products of the American press in the trappings of a European bibliophilism. Even a reader who does not share these ideas cannot help but view such an altered artifact differently.

George Brinley's will called for his books to be sold at auction, and the cataloguing was entrusted to his friend J. Hammond Trumbull, librarian of the Watkinson Library of Hartford. Trum-

⁴⁵ Reese, 'George Brinley and His Library,' p. 30; Stevens, *Recollections of Mr. James Lenox*, passim.

bull had few useful reference tools at his disposal for early imprints. Isaiah Thomas had proposed compiling a list of significant imprints but made little progress. The enthusiastic librarian of the American Antiquarian Society, Christopher Columbus Baldwin, continued to work on the Thomas scheme until his tragic death in a stagecoach accident while visiting Indian mounds in Ohio. The project languished for twenty years before Samuel Foster Haven, Jr., the son of the librarian of the Society, worked on it extensively in the 1850s, but progress was halted again when he was killed at the Battle of Chancellorsville. His list of about 7,500 items printed before 1776, generally giving only the briefest information, was finally issued as the appendix to the second edition of Thomas's *History of Printing*, published in 1874.⁴⁶

Trumbull's catalogue of the Brinley books, issued in parts from 1878 as the sales took place, set a new standard in imprint bibliography, both in extent of description and the number of items covered in detail. Brinley amassed the largest private collection of pre-1740 imprints ever assembled, and over a century later only a few institutions now rival his holdings. In fact, a significant percentage of items for this period now extant came from the Brinley collection. Virtually all of these have now passed into institutions, either at the sale itself or through the hands of other collectors before World War II.⁴⁷

The Brinley sale represented a significant shift, both in the nature of the buyers and in the emphasis on early imprints. For the first time in an American book sale, institutional buyers dominated, aided by gifts of money left in Brinley's will that were to be spent at the sale. Other major buyers like Lenox or the Brown family created institutions within the next few decades. Although

46. Clifford K. Shipton, 'Bibliotheca Americana,' *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 62 (1968): 351-59; Isaiah Thomas, *The History of Printing in America*, 2 vols., 2d ed. (Albany, 1874), 2: 309-666.

47. [J. Hammond Trumbull], *Catalogue of the American Library of the Late Mr. George Brinley* (Hartford, 1878-93). The sale took place in four sessions in New York in 1879, 1880, 1881, and 1886, and in a final session in Boston in 1893. At the time of the last sale, an index was issued as well. For accounts of the events of the sale, see Reese, McCorison, and Adams, as cited above.

there were other important private buyers approximately contemporary with Brinley, by the early twentieth century the major holdings of early imprints and the leading purchasers were institutions. In recent years, only one very extensive collection of early imprints has been privately formed.⁴⁸

The name of Charles Evans is the first one that occurs to the scholar researching early American imprints. In the midst of a professional library career, probably around 1886, Evans conceived the idea of compiling a chronological bibliography of American imprints through 1820. He may have seriously begun work on it while he was at the Newberry Library from 1892 to 1895; in 1901, he left library work to devote all of his time to the project. A prospectus was issued in 1902, and the first volume, covering the period 1639 to 1729, was published the following year. Entitled *American Bibliography . . . a Chronological Dictionary of All Books, Pamphlets and Periodical Publications Printed in the United States of America from the Genesis of Printing in 1639 Down to and Including the Year 1820* (later revised to 1800), it was published, marketed, and distributed by the author, as were all twelve volumes published in his lifetime. Although the project subsequently suffered major delays, it progressed rapidly at first; the second volume, covering 1730 to 1750, was issued in 1904.⁴⁹

Perhaps the most remarkable thing about Evans's bibliography is how accurate and inclusive it is, despite the obstacles he had to overcome. He was not able to leave Chicago during the compilation of the first volume, and he had to make do with printed library catalogues and such notes as Trumbull's annotations to the Haven list, from a copy supplied to him by the American Antiquarian Society. Evans was also able to draw on the work of other bibliog-

48. See McCorison, 'George Brinley, Americanist' for an account of Brinley and the institutions. The private collectors that I think of besides those named already are E. D. Church, Edward Crowninshield, Charles Deane, Henry DuPuy, Matt B. Jones, Ogden Goelet, Levi Leiter, George Livermore, and William Menzies. Biographical sketches of all of them are in Donald C. Dickinson, *Dictionary of American Book Collectors* (Westport, Conn., 1986). Michael Zinman of Ardsley, New York, is the present earl of early American imprint collectors.

49. Edward G. Halley, *Charles Evans, American Bibliographer* (Urbana, Ill., 1963), pp. 181-215.

raphers. The most notable of these, Charles Hildeburn, published the first good state imprints bibliography, of Pennsylvania, in 1886. However, this method inevitably led to incorrect author entries, false titles, ghosts, and assumptions based on runs of almanacs or gaps in session laws. Clifford Shipton estimated that in the early volumes of Evans one entry in ten was in error in some way, and of course there were items Evans missed entirely.⁵⁰

After Evans died in 1935 the American Antiquarian Society, which had aided him throughout the project, took over the *American Bibliography*, publishing the final volume (1955), an index (1959), and the short-title rearrangement into alphabetical order, edited by Clifford Shipton and James Mooney (1969). In 1970 a supplement, prepared by Roger Bristol, added 11,262 entries to the 39,162 items that Evans and Shipton-Mooney list collectively, for a total of over fifty thousand pre-1801 imprints. Besides the problems already cited in regard to Evans's work, a number of these entries were based on evidence in manuscript records or advertisements, although no copy is known.

In 1980 the Society inaugurated the North American Imprints Program (NAIP), which has now completed its initial goal of listing all pre-1801 imprints for which copies could be located, beginning with the holdings of the Society and then including other libraries. Locations are based on institutional reports of holdings and on bibliographers of proven reliability like Thomas J. Holmes, bibliographer of the Mathers. Numerous access points make it possible to sort entries by printer, location, provenance, publisher, and relevant bibliography. The completion of NAIP opens many new fields to researchers on early American imprints and to students of the history of the book in America. It is a notable achievement to mark the anniversary of American printing we commemorate today.

50. Shipton, 'Bibliotheca Americana,' pp. 351-59; Clarence S. Brigham, 'Charles Evans,' *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 45 (1935): 16; Lawrence C. Wroth, 'Evans's American Bibliography: A Matrix of Histories.' This is the introduction to the special edition of the first volume of *American Bibliography*, issued by Goodspeed's Book Shop in 1943.

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