

Nathaniel Coverly and Son, Printers,
1767-1825

KATE VAN WINKLE KELLER

IN JUNE 1814, Isaiah Thomas was in Boston for a meeting of the Antiquarian Society—predecessor of the American Antiquarian Society—that he had founded two years earlier. On the second day of the month, he walked across the bridge to Charlestown to visit Dr. Moore, minister of the Congregational Church.¹ That same day, perhaps on his way back to his lodgings, he stopped at a printing office to pick up an armful of sheets of

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1. Benjamin Thomas Hill, ed., 'The Diary of Isaiah Thomas, 1805-1828,' *Transactions and Collections of the American Antiquarian Society* 9 (1909): 229.

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songs and ballads that he had ordered the previous year.² Thomas took the collection home to Worcester, where he had it bound in his own bindery, and, in the first volume, described the contents.

Songs, Ballads, &c. In Three Volumes.

Purchased from a Ballad Printer and Seller in Boston, 1813. Bound up for Preservation to shew what articles of this kind are in vogue with the Vulgar at this time, 1814.

N.B. Songs & common Ballads are not so well printed at this time as ~~they~~ 70 years ago, in Boston.

Presented to the Society by

Isaiab Thomas

Augt. 1814.

The purchase of more than three hundred ballad sheets was an important act, saving the evidence of Boston's street literature printed in 1813.³ Since nearly half of the 334 sheets in the collection bear the imprint of Nathaniel Coverly, Jr., and another 120 were probably printed by Coverly, it is likely that Thomas made his purchase at Coverly's small shop on the corner of Milk Street and Theatre Alley, now Devonshire Street. Thomas, who was apprenticed to the Boston printer Zechariah Fowle in mid-1756, had known the Coverly family from that time. He had indeed preserved the material he wanted, but could not resist observing the poor quality of paper and presswork.⁴

2. Hill, *Diary of Isaiab Thomas*, 232. His cash book shows his expenditure of \$4.50 'paid for songs, ballads, &c.' He spent \$1.50 on binding the three volumes, bringing the total to \$6.00.

3. Thomas's purchase preserved examples of most of Nathaniel Coverly's actual shop stock for the year 1813, which is what makes this collection—a virtual catalogue—unique. Scholars cherish the few surviving catalogues of early broadside printers, checklists of their stock that also offer clues to their customers' tastes. Only the smaller ballad collection of the Thomas Ford press in the 1830s in Chesterfield, England, is as extensive for a single printer in the English language for so short a span of time. A little more than half the size of Thomas's, this collection has 167 sheets with 296 different texts. See *Thomas Ford's Ballads*, ed. Roy Palmer (Felinfach, Wales: Llanerch Publishers, 2001), a facsimile publication.

4. Thomas exhibited a bit of pique here and he restated this rather unfair opinion on the flyleaf of the third volume, forgetting that it was 1814, not 1813. 'N. B. Songs and common ballads were much better printed in Boston 70 ages past than they now are in 1813.' He was actually only sixty-five at the time—it was August 1814 and he was born on

However, even if Thomas had not made the collection, Coverly's broadsides would still be found in other collections. There are copies of the same broadsides in many repositories and several dozen more with Coverly's imprint that are not included in the Thomas collection. Even so, Thomas's remarkable collection shows that Coverly was the main provider of broadside ballad sheets in Boston from 1810 to 1815. He continued to print broadsides after Thomas had taken his collection to Worcester.

Most studies of early American printers dismiss the Coverlys as insignificant and unimportant. The Coverlys frequently packed up their press, type, and family in a horse-drawn wagon to travel in search of a new start in a more promising location. Up to the time of their bankruptcies in 1802, both father and son were careful to document their output with clear imprints. After that time, thanks to the Thomas collection and the holdings of AAS, we have evidence of twenty more years of their presswork, by then in Boston and reflecting a more established situation. By tracing the imprints and studying the broadside collection in depth, and by searching court, newspaper, and other sources, a coherent picture of the careers of Nathaniel Coverly and his son has emerged.

Nathaniel Coverly, Sr., supplied material for everyday reading in New England from 1767 to 1805; Nathaniel, Jr., joined the family business in 1795 and then carried on by himself. The checklist that follows* demonstrates that they were contributors to the reading material of adults and children in New England for more than fifty years, from *The History of the Holy Jesus* in 1770 and the rabble-rousing broadsides of 1775 and 1776 to patriotic songs praising the naval exploits of Boston's own U.S.S. *Constitution* in the War of

January 8, 1748/49, old style, or January 19, 1749, new style. This date is corroborated by Thomas's indenture documents. While the paper on which the broadsides were printed was certainly of inferior quality, the printing of the type and cuts in most cases was quite good. While Thomas realized that he needed the documents to round out his collection, he clearly did not respect them or their printer very much.

*The checklist will be published in Vol. 117, part 2.

1812 and the popular contemporary narrative of *The Female Marine*. To scan the publications of the two printers is to learn much about the ordinary people who lived in Boston, Concord, Chelmsford, Medford, Salem, Plymouth, and Middleborough, Massachusetts; Amherst and Haverhill, New Hampshire; and Newbury, Vermont—all towns where the Coverlys set up presses and tried to make a living.⁵ The imprints tell a bittersweet tale of a repeated cycle of success followed by failure, a bankruptcy, and finally, out of the ashes, a successful business.

The Coverly Family

Records of the Coverly family can be found in Boston from the early eighteenth century.

The family may have originated in northwest England, via the West Indies.⁶ Captain Thomas Coverly (1682–1747) was married in Boston to Mary Wells on September 4, 1707, by the Reverend Cotton Mather. During the early decades of the eighteenth century, Coverly commanded ships (one of which he named for his infant daughters, Hannah and Mary), trading chiefly with the West Indies.⁷

5. For an essay on the overall tenor of the output of Nathaniel Coverly, Sr., as popular culture, see Barbara A. Vayo, 'Nathaniel Coverly, Popular Printer, 1767–1816,' typescript, American Studies Seminar, American Antiquarian Society, Fall 1997.

6. Internet searches on www.familysearch.org indicate that Coverly families lived in the Bahamas and Barbados from the seventeenth century to the twentieth. A Thomas Coverly was listed for 1638 in *Early Inhabitants of Barbados*, in the *Historical and Genealogical Register* 39 (1885): 134. A Nathaniel Coverly, Jr., married in 1728 in Providence Island. In the 1740 census of the Bahama Islands, William Coverly is listed with a wife, Jane, and three children whose names, Thomas, Mary, and Nathaniel, are similar to those found in the Boston Coverly families. (<http://boards.ancestry.com/mbexec/message/5535/localities.caribbean.bermuda.general/70.74>, accessed January 12, 2005.) Yorkshire as a point of origin appears often in genealogical searches in England for the name Coverly/Coverley/Caverley.

There is no connection, of course, with the mythical figure of 'Sir Roger de Coverly' who was a literary invention of Addison and Steele for *The Spectator* of 1711, although the name of a tune, associated with a Lancaster hornpipe called 'Roger of Cauverley,' can be found in a 1648 tract. For details see Kate Van Winkle Keller and George A. Fogg, *Country Dances from Colonial New York: James Alexander's Notebook, 1730* (Boston: Country Dance Society, Boston Centre, 2000), 43. During the Revolutionary War, Jonathan Sewall (1728–96) used 'Sir Roger de Coverly' as a pen name.

7. 'Thomas Coverly, ye sloop Hanah & Mary, [from] Surrenam, no passengers.' *Passengers and Vessels to America* (Boston: New England Historical Genealogical Society, June 1712), 11. See also Custom House records in the *Boston Gazette* from 1716 to 1747. Sailings to Bermuda, Newfoundland, Madeira, and Rotterdam are also recorded.

He lost his life when his ship was destroyed on the rocks east of Marblehead, Massachusetts, in a violent storm.⁸ Thomas (1710-78), his eldest son, also followed the sea but with better luck. He too commanded ships sailing to and from the West Indies. In 1753 he lost his sloop to the Spanish but was rescued.⁹ During the French and Indian War he was captain of the *Two Sisters*, a privateer of twenty guns operating out of Jamaica.¹⁰ It was taken by a small French privateer but Captain Coverly eventually escaped and returned home.

This Thomas Coverly's eldest son, also Thomas (1738 or 39-1802), chose a land-based trade, becoming a successful merchant in Boston and maintaining a comfortable home at 40 Newbury Street.¹¹ It was in the same neighborhood as the home of his half-brother, Samuel (at No. 56); the office of printers Isaiah Thomas and Ebenezer Andrews (at No. 45); and the home of James Morrill (at No. 43), for whom Coverly printed a trade card. The eldest half-brother, Nathaniel, was drawn to the printer's trade, but there is no record of his apprenticeship. When he issued his first documented imprint, *The Death of Abel* (1768), it was as a partner of Zechariah Fowle, a printer and bookseller whose output of children's books and small pamphlets mirrored Coverly's later publications. His acquaintance with Fowle undoubtedly brought Coverly into contact with Fowle's off-and-on apprentice, Isaiah Thomas. Five years his junior, Thomas's emerging talents in the art and business of printing would perhaps guide him; it certainly influenced him. Coverly and Thomas worked in tandem in the printing trade in Boston into the 1780s and Coverly's later attempts to establish newspapers in various county seats in Massachusetts and New Hampshire emulated the efforts of the younger

8. Only one seaman survived; all the others drowned. *Boston Gazette*, December 1, 1747.

9. *Boston Gazette*, April 17, 1753.

10. *Boston Gazette*, May 23, 1757.

11. This is not Thomas Coverly of Sudbury (wife Anna) who was declared bankrupt in 1765-68. (See Ann S. Lainhart, 'Weston Cautions, 1757-1803,' *New England Historical and Genealogical Register* 144 [July 1990]: 216.) The opulent contents of Thomas's Boston home were described in the probate papers of his widow, Lucy, in 1827.

man. Indeed, when the Reverend William Bentley of Salem recalls 'poor Coverley, the printer, who gave [up] his newspaper in the war,' he was probably confusing the two. Isaiah Thomas did establish a short-lived newspaper in the Salem area in the 1770s.¹²

Both Thomas and Coverly were part of a community of printers and artisans in the early 1770s when Coverly printed a small, children's book titled *The History of the Holy Jesus* that shared text and many illustrations with similar copies printed 'for' John Boyle, Ezekial Russell, Zechariah Fowle, and Isaiah Thomas. There is no consensus as to which of these printers did the work for the others, but it may well have been Coverly.¹³ Some of the cuts in this book are attributed to Isaiah Thomas himself.¹⁴

Coverly apparently had also learned to execute relief cuts. The only cut positively attributed to him is the frontispiece to Watts's *Divine Songs* that he published in 1775 (Fig. 1).¹⁵

Several other images that he published bear resemblances to one other and seem akin to the Watts frontispiece. They are the two pieces in *The Number of the Beast* (Reilly 1173 and 1174) and the head pieces for three broadsides published in Chelmsford, *A poem on the bloody engagement that was fought on Bunker's Hill* and *Poetical remarks upon the fight at the Boston Light-House*, repeated on *A poem on the late distress of the town of Boston* (Reilly 1134). Most of the other images in Coverly's publications of the 1770s appear to reflect the work of several different hands.¹⁶

12. August 24, 1815, *The Diary of William Bentley, Pastor of the East Church, Salem, Massachusetts*, 4 vols. (Salem: Essex Institute, 1904-15), 4: 347. The ill-fated paper was the *Essex Journal*, and *Merrimack Packet*, which Thomas established in Newburyport in December 1773 with Henry Walter Tinges. The partnership lasted but a year. See Clifford K. Shipton, *Isaiah Thomas, Printer, Patriot and Philanthropist, 1749-1831* (Rochester: Leo Hart, 1948), 29. Neither Coverly nor his son ever printed a newspaper in Salem.

13. D'Alté A. Welch, *A Bibliography of American Children's Books Printed Prior to 1821* (Worcester: American Antiquarian Society, 1972), 189-93.

14. Elizabeth Carroll Reilly, *A Dictionary of Colonial American Printer's Ornaments and Illustrations* (Worcester: American Antiquarian Society, 1975), Nos. 1248, 1252, 1255, 1265, 1274, and 1276.

15. This image of Isaac Watts (Evans 42981) is a reverse copy of one published in Boston in 1771 (Evans 12031), See Reilly, *Dictionary*, 1189.

16. See Reilly, *Dictionary*, 498.



Fig. 1. A portrait of Dr. Watts is the frontispiece for Coverly's 1775 edition of Isaac Watts, *Divine Songs. Attempted in Easy Language, for the Use of Children*, 14th ed. (Boston: Printed and sold by N. Coverly, 1775; Evans 42981; Reilly 1190). The initials 'NC' appear in the lower left hand corner. This cut reappeared in a number of Coverly's imprints and was copied by others. Courtesy American Antiquarian Society.

Life was very unsettled for printers during the buildup to the Revolutionary War. During the occupation of Boston by the British, most fled the town, taking their equipment with them if they could. Coverly, who married Susannah Cowell in 1769, produced only eight titles between 1770 and 1775. He moved to Chelmsford that year, where he printed two pamphlets and five broadsides, most with texts by the Reverend Elisha Rich. In 1776 the Coverlys and their growing family (eventually a daughter and five sons, the oldest of whom—Nathaniel, Jr.—would follow him into the printing trade) moved to nearby Concord where he was able in 1776 to print an eighty-page primer and a forty-page sermon, as well as another broadside. In 1777 the family moved back to Boston, settling in Newbury Street where he produced several substantial pamphlets on various topics, most on his own behalf, a few for others. Coverly had retained his friends in town. In November 1778 he was named co-executor of the small estate of cabinetmaker Henry Snow, who referred to him as ‘my good friend.’¹⁷ In 1781 he formed a partnership with Robert Hodge, which was soon dissolved, and in 1783 he printed *The London Merchant* for Isaiah Thomas.¹⁸ The years 1783 and 1784 brought large jobs with the publication of the 360-page *Bath-Kol* and *The British Grammar* of 282 pages, as well as a number of lesser books.

In 1780 Nathaniel Coverly was living in a low-cost rental property, valued at £20. In 1784 his residence in Ward Twelve was worth £100.¹⁹ He was taxed on £75 of personal property, and his brother Samuel was living with him and his growing family.²⁰ But that year the tax collector made a note by Coverly’s name that he had gone ‘to Plymouth,’ suggesting that the town did not expect to collect the amount due.

17. Suffolk County Probate Records, 77: 261. November 6, 1778. For the estate, Coverly sold Snow’s Temple Street property to Mathew Bayley in 1784.

18. Thomas and Coverly were business associates during these years. Coverly placed several advertisements for his *Impartial History of the War* in Thomas’s *Massachusetts Spy* in late summer 1781, and listed Thomas as one who would accept subscriptions for this work (August 30 and September 13).

19. Coverly’s name does not appear in the Suffolk County land records; his residences were probably rentals.

20. Taking Book, Ward 12 Boston (1784), 26, 27.

A Move To Plymouth

What caused Coverly to depart suddenly is not clear, but his presence in Plymouth is confirmed by the publication on March 19, 1785, of a newspaper entitled *The Plymouth Journal and the Massachusetts Advertiser*. Volume 1, number one, 'printed and published by Nathaniel Coverly,' had a generously sized nameplate with a copy of the 1623 seal of the Plymouth colony in the center with a Latin motto, 'Patrum pietate ortum, Filiorum virtute servandum,'²¹ a phrase that is 'not part of the seal, but an add-on from the printer of the newspaper.'²² The copy was laid out with attractive decorative borders surrounding advertisements in a style that distinguishes much of Coverly's work. Display type was well managed and white space served to set off titles and headlines (Fig. 2).

The first number of the *Plymouth Journal* carried an essay by Coverly promoting 'The Benefit of News-Papers and Almanacks.' His summary of the uses of the paper is a witty description of small-town life. Newspapers, he told his readers, in addition to being vital for the acquisition of world and local news, served as vehicles through which 'the farmer sets his farm and cattle for sale—the mechanic his manufactures—the cuckold advertises his wife, and exposes his shame to save his money. In NEWS-PAPERS, rogues are published—stolen goods are found—fools are laughed at—dishonest men derided—vice scourged—and counterfeit money defeated.' Advertisements placed by his half-brother Thomas and his brother Samuel for their shops in Boston suggest that Coverly had strong backing from his family. To increase traffic in his own shop, Coverly sold books and stationery as well.²³ By May he needed an assistant and in June advertised specifically for 'an apprentice to the Printing business, a smart active boy,

21. '[Plymouth is] arisen from the piety of her fathers and is to be sustained by the virtue of her sons.' My thanks to John Hildebrand for this translation.

22. Electronic mail communication from Laurence R. Pizer, town clerk of Plymouth, to author, June 19, 2006.

23. A trade card 'printed by N. Coverly' for James Morrill, friend and neighbor of his brother Samuel in Boston is attributed to this period (Clifford K. Shipton and James E. Mooney, *National Index of American Imprints Through 1800: The Short-Title Evans*, 2 vols. [Worcester: American Antiquarian Society, 1969], no. 47119, 1786?).

To be Sold,
BY
Joseph Croswell,
At his SHOP, near
Mr. JSAAC SYMES, Baker,
in PLYMOUTH,
The following Articles;
CHEAP for CASH:
viz.

WEST-INDIA and New-
England Rum, French
Brandy, Cordials, Spices, Rais-
ons, Currants and Figs, Choco-
late and Shells, Sugar, Flour,
Red-Wood, Copperas, Allum,
French Indigo, Brimstone, Vir-
ginia Tobacco. Cream coloured
Ware, Pewter, Nails of different
sorts, Warming-Pans, Frying-
Pans, and other Hard-Ware.

L I K E W I S E.

Broad-Cloths, Baizes, Flan-
nels, Buttons, Twist, Silk,
Thread, Ribbons and Tasse, of
different colours, Black Moods,
Laces, Shawls, Lawn, Gauzes,
Gloves. Also Almanacks, Spel-
ling Books, Ready Reckoner,
Paper for Rooms, Writing and
Pres-Paper, with many other
Articles.

Samuel Coverly,
No. 9, Marlborough-Street,
B O S T O N.
IMPORTS AND SELLS
English Goods,
CUTLERY AND
Hard-Ware,
By Wholesale and Retail,
At the lowest rate for
C A S H.

CASH given for POT
and PEARL-ASH, and
all kinds of Shipping FURS.

Fig. 2. Advertisements for the shop of Joseph Croswell of Plymouth and Samuel Coverly of Boston appeared in the *Plymouth Journal* and the *Massachusetts Advertiser*, December 13, 1785. Courtesy American Antiquarian Society.

about 16 years of age.²⁴ A year later, as the paper went into its second volume, Coverly was 'once more' pleading for subscribers to pay their arrears, a refrain that would haunt him for the rest of his career.²⁵ The following week he threatened to lodge suits against such deadbeats.

He was printing other pieces as well, trying to wring from the business a living for himself and his growing family. In addition to the newspaper, other titles printed in Plymouth were chiefly pamphlets between twenty-four and sixty-four pages in length. Several title pages included the note that his publications could also be 'had by the booksellers in Boston, by the gross, dozen or single.' And then at some point in 1787, Coverly moved his press about ten miles southwest to Middleborough, from whence several more small publications were issued.

This effort also failed in less than a year, and Coverly returned to Boston to a shop 'at the corner of Back-Street, leading to Charles River-Bridge.' In Boston over the next seven years, he tried various partnerships and locations, printed for other publishers, and issued a number of almanacs and children's books. He did not try a newspaper again but did attempt a monthly literary magazine, *The Gentlemen and Ladies Town and Country Magazine*, beginning in February 1789. He commissioned handsome frontispieces from John Norman for the first few issues, and then when it became clear that subscriptions were not sufficient, used less-skilled artists for the frontispieces. A two-month partnership with William Hoyt did not help, and the August 1790 issue was the last. Coverly also did some business with Isaiah Thomas, who made two payments to Coverly of £20 each, one on January 22 and another on September 13, 1790.²⁶ He may have purchased copies of the new magazine or perhaps another title from Coverly to sell in his Worcester bookstore.

24. *Plymouth Journal*, May 15, 1785; June 7, 1785.

25. *Plymouth Journal*, May 2, 1786.

26. Charles L. Nichols, ed. 'Extracts from the Diaries and Accounts of Isaiah Thomas from the Year 1782 to 1804 and His Diary for 1808,' *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 26 (1916): 63.

To Concord, Massachusetts, and then to New Hampshire

By July 24, 1794, Nathaniel Coverly had established himself in Concord 'near the Court House,' where he printed *An Oration Pronounced at Concord, the Fourth of July, 1794* by William Jones. In the back of this pamphlet is a nicely laid out advertisement informing 'the public and his former customers in particular, that he has lately removed from Boston, to the town of Concord, Massachusetts, where he executes all kinds of printing, in a neat and correct manner.' He maintained a bookshop as well, for retail and wholesale buyers, offering spelling books, psalters, primers, children's picture books, 'by the gross, or single dozen.' In the few months he stayed in Concord, Coverly also printed a ninety-two page book by Thomas Priestly and another edition of *The New-England Primer*, a steady seller.

There was not sufficient business in Concord, so in December the family moved on. This time they settled in the county seat of Amherst, New Hampshire. The nameplate of the first number of the *Amherst Journal and the New-Hampshire Advertiser* featured a patriotic relief engraving with the national emblem of a spread eagle in a nimbus. In an editorial in the next issue, Coverly discussed choosing the name and purpose of the new paper. His prose reveals his learning and wit.

A Number of acquaintance, having been informed of my intention of publishing a Newspaper at AMHERST, a *name* by which this EMBRYO paper should be distinguished, became immediately the object of their friendly investigation. As I have not gratified any one, and as it is impossible to gratify all, I shall take this opportunity of making public acknowledgement for their friendship, and of doing justice to their ingenuity by publishing their proposals. To this I am further induced from the consideration, that if any of my brother Printers should find their *brains teeming* with a design of editing a Newspaper, *their parturient labours*, may not be embarrassed with the drudgery of hunting up a title; by which the *offspring* may be known to the world; but will most probably here find one to their liking already *cut and dried*.²⁷

27. *Amherst Journal and the New-Hampshire Advertiser*, January 16, 1795.

The suggestions that follow in his editorial seem fictitious—the whole being an entertaining piece that is neighborly, friendly, and well written.

In the issue of February 20, 1795, Coverly advertised for a 'Journeyman Printer to work both at Case and Press, as occasion may offer,' a plea repeated into May that apparently found no takers. On April 24, the masthead of the *Amberst Journal* indicates that Coverly had taken his eldest son Nathaniel into partnership as 'N. Coverly and Son' and the nameplate boasted a handsome new version of the national emblem, the spread eagle. Nathaniel was then about twenty years old and had probably already spent many hours with his father in the printing shop as a youngster. Soon his name began to appear on other printed pieces.

There was more work than even two could manage. On September 26, 1795, another advertisement was placed for a helper in the *Amberst Journal*. 'WANTED. A Journeyman PRINTER, to work both at Case and Press, as occasion may offer, who is a good workman, and understands the business. To such a one, generous wages will be given, by the Printers hereof.' It is not known if a journeyman was recruited, although Coverly's mix of work and aspirations show how tenuous the business could be. The nameplate of the paper was changed in early October to a less flamboyant and smaller version of the 'United States Arms' in the spread eagle on the left.²⁸ An illustration of the 'New-Hampshire Arms,' with a small, one-masted boat and rising sun, was on the right. During this period, Coverly's printing included various forms for use by the court, such as 'Justice's Writs and Summons, Blank Deeds, Mortgage Deeds, Blank Bonds, Executions, Acknowledgement's before Justice. &c. &c.'²⁹ Coverly also proposed printing several books by subscription: *The French Convert* (120 pages, August 21, 1795) and *Divine Hymns, or Spiritual Songs* by Joshua Smith and Samuel

28. This move may have been a technical improvement as previous nameplates show that the original cut was very hard to print clearly.

29. *Amberst Journal*, October 17, 1795.

Sleeper (192 pages, September 19, 1795). In each case, he needed five hundred subscriptions to go to press with the job, and they apparently did not materialize.

While the Coverly press seemed fairly busy, it might not indicate that all was well financially. Six months earlier the selectmen of Amherst, New Hampshire, had authorized Constable Samuel Stanley to enforce New Hampshire's laws for warning out individuals who could not claim a residence in the town that would entitle them to relief should they become needy. The constable issued a warning to several families living in Amherst, indicating the concern that 'by some unforeseen misfortune the afforesaid persons may be Deprived of their property and thereby Become Chargeable to the afforesaid town.' They were 'to Depart and Leave the said Town of Amherst within fourteen days next after such warning and Return to the Respective towns from whence they came.' Included in the list were 'Nath'l Coverly and his wife Susanna, and their Children, Nathl., Thoms, Wells, & Edward from Concord in the Common wealth of Massachusetts, who came into the sd town of Amherst in the month of Decembr 1794 to Reside and Dwell therein.' Stanley noted on the back of the sheet that he gave the warnings on April 15, 1795.³⁰ Coverly's colleague Charles Cambridge and his family were also cited in the warning. Neither family left immediately as directed. Cambridge stayed for several years, operating a bookstore. The Coverlys held on for nine months, trying to wrest a living from the newspaper.³¹

Throughout the year, Coverly had implored his subscribers to pay for their newspapers but he was unsuccessful in that effort as well as in attracting advertisers.³² In addition there was a competitor

30. Hillsborough County Court Case, Series A, no. 7607, Folder A, no. 30, March 5, 1795. New Hampshire State Archives. Two children, Hannah and John, are missing from this list. Hannah would have been around twenty-seven and John was seventeen. They may have remained in Boston with relatives.

31. Charles Cambridge, who owed \$15.00, was among those indebted to Coverly in 1802 when the bankruptcy papers were served.

32. Coverly was not alone with this problem. The editor of the *Salem [Mass.] Gazette* inserted a column 'To Subscribers' on December 7, 1802. Carefully walking the narrow path between insulting those who did pay and trying to wring payment out of those who

in the wings. In the issue of October 24, 1795, Coverly inserted a column outlining his reasons for coming to Amherst and attacking the integrity of his competition.

TO THE PUBLIC.

The Editors of this Paper, being solicited by a number of Gentlemen of this Town (for more than two years past) to move their utensils, for carrying on the Printing Business in this County, but being sensible of the great expense and difficulty that attends moving a large Family, together with their Printing Materials, had declined the undertaking, till about ten months ago, when, after the greatest exertions in their power to obtain the patronage of the Public for a weekly News Paper, they commenced the Publication of the Amherst Journal, although the Subscribers at that time, were but very few, in consequence of which, the number then, and for months after, were inadequate to support the Publication of a Paper; and even at this period, the number has not accumulated more than barely to defray the expence, and support a Family.

The Editors therefore, feel themselves greatly injured, and disappointed, in their expectations of getting a comfortable support by the ungenerous attempt of a Mr. Biglow (who never followed the Printing Business, and has no Family to maintain,) to Publish a weekly Paper in this Town in order to deprive the Editors from that encouragement of the Public, that their trouble and expense justly merited. As for the gentleman who encouraged him, he may be assured, his malice will never meet the approbation of the Public, nor be approved of by his friends, ALTHOUGH he was, in the Commencement of the American Revolution, very unfriendly to the Independence of these United States.

More particulars of this affair will be published in a future Paper.

The Amherst Journal continued to appear weekly, often bearing pleas for 'those subscribers who are in arrears for this paper' to

did not, he noted that 'From the statements of the Aurora, Gazette of the United States, Washington Federalist, &c. we believe the eastern papers have . . . a proportion of Delinquent Customers, whom it is sometimes necessary to notify of their obligations by advertisement. . . . A number such we have now on our list, who, we hope, will take this as a sufficient notice that we are in want.'

settle up and offering to take 'Corn, Rye, Pork, Butter or Cheese' in lieu of cash.³³

On November 28, a more aggressive column concerning the future of the paper appeared. The Coverlys outlined their 'proposals and conditions for extending and increasing the circulation' of the paper and again took aim at their competitor. 'Notwithstanding the mean artifice of the intended *Editor* of the "VILLAGE MESSENGER," to supercede the *Editors* of the AMHERST JOURNAL, in the *infant* undertaking of their paper, they doubt not, the *impartial public*, will despise so ungenerous an attempt, by giving that encouragement and support to their paper, that might *justly* frustrate him, in his *contemptible* undertaking.' The *Journal* continued to appear, the issue of December 26 again asking people to pay but assuring them that their subscriptions would be 'sent on as usual' in the following year. But the issue of January 9, 1796, the final number of volume one, contained the startling announcement that the Coverlys had sold the paper to William Biglow and Samuel Cushing and intended to leave the area the following month. All the ugly remarks about their competitors were erased by a 'valuable consideration' and now they were pronounced 'well qualified for the business they have undertaken.' Subscribers to Flavel's *Token* were informed that they should pick up their copies 'within the present month,' and those who subscribed to the *Narrative of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson* were told that the book was in press and would be ready on the first of February. The *Village Messenger* began publication the same day, January 9, and no further issues of the *Amherst Journal* appeared.³⁴ The Coverlys placed several advertisements in the *Village Messenger* the next month asking for subscribers to pick up books and for those indebted for newspapers and advertisements to please make settlement. On February 9, they lodged

33. *Amherst Journal*, November 21, 1795.

34. The issue of January 9, 1796, is on microfilm at the Amherst (N. H.) Town Library as are most issues of the *Village Messenger* and its successors. *Amherst Journal*, volume one, issues one to fifty-one, is at AAS.

their accounts with Benjamin Wade and threatened legal action if they were not paid.³⁵

With no option but to move on, the Coverlys hoped for a new beginning, looking again for a county seat that could provide court and government business. Their choice was two villages on opposite banks of the upper Connecticut River. Haverhill, New Hampshire, and Newbury, Vermont, were both court and market towns for the north country. In the words of a local historian, the years between the end of the Revolutionary War and 1800 were 'on the whole, very prosperous ones for those who had been here long enough to have established themselves, or those who came here with money enough to purchase improved farms. The country between Haverhill and Concord had become settled, and the roads were better every year. The whole north country from here to Canada line was filling up with an industrious and thrifty population. Newbury being at the head of boat navigation on the river, had the great advantage of situation.'³⁶ The Vermont legislature had met in Newbury in 1787, and the Haverhill academy was opened in 1793.

The family settled in Haverhill and Nathaniel, Sr., and his son opened a shop on the green near the courthouse. Young Nathaniel soon established another printing office across the river in Newbury, his first on his own. Wisely, he too selected a small building near the courthouse for his shop, hoping to attract foot traffic for his bookstore, lending library, and printing business from the courts, as well as the lawyers and businessmen who came to the area.³⁷

35. *Village Messenger*, February 9, 16, and 23, 1796. The paper was not much more successful in Biglow and Cushing's hands; Biglow, a recent Harvard graduate, left in July and Samuel Cushing continued alone until April 11, 1797, when he sold to Samuel Preston, who bought 'the whole printing apparatus' (*Village Messenger*, April 18, 1797). Preston, 'feeling a decline of health,' gave up the paper entirely in 1801 (*Village Messenger*, November 28, 1801). The successor to the *Village Messenger*, the *Farmer's Cabinet*, carried lists of unclaimed letters in the Amherst Post Office; curiously, several issues included Nathaniel Coverly's name: January 6, 1803, October 2, 1804, and April 4, 1808.

36. Frederic P. Wells, *History of Newbury, Vermont* (St. Johnsbury: The Caledonian Co., 1902), 123.

37. According to Coverly's description of the shop when he offered it for sale in the *Salem Gazette* on September 11, 1798, it was a 'commodious building, 28 feet long and 20 wide.' Coverly owned only the shop, not the land it stood on. Newbury land records do not show Coverly as a landowner, although he and Isaac Bayley signed as witnesses to a

He acquired a press and type and in the spring of 1796 began publication of a newspaper called the *Orange Nightingale and Newbury Morning Star*. In the nameplate Coverly used the two relief cuts he and his father had used for the *Amherst Gazette*, the arms of the United States and those of the state of New Hampshire. Frederic Wells saw part of No. 15 for August 25. 'It was well printed, carefully made up, appears to have been Federalist in politics and bore the motto: "Here truth is welcome—Candour guides the way."³⁸ Without a wife or son as a helper in the business, Coverly advertised for two journeyman printers 'to whom constant employ, and good wages will be given' in his second issue on May 19, 1796, and for a 'smart active lad, to serve as an apprentice' on June 30.

While Coverly was in Newbury, where he printed the *Orange Nightingale* from May 1796 to September 1797, he produced four substantial books, including one as a subcontractor for a Boston printer. Most of these books look clean and well printed with good, clear type. On the last three pages of Silas Ballou's *New Hymns*, Coverly printed a list of the books in his 'Circulating Library' he had 'lately received from Boston.' There were more than one hundred twenty-five titles, some of several volumes, both imported and domestically printed, ranging from Locke's *Essays* and the 'Beauties of Sterne' to the history of New York and 'Neckar on Religious Appearances.' He also carried editions of Watts's psalms and hymns, dictionaries, Webster's spelling books,

sale of the property of Jacob Fragel, Jr., on July 2, 1796. Coverly was assessed a school tax in 1797 that he had not paid ('School tax list for 1797,' in Johnson Papers, 1: 14, Tenney Memorial Library, Newbury). Sometime in the nineteenth century, the shop burned (Wells, *History of Newbury*, 243).

A foundation of the same dimensions supports the front section of a house now standing on the spot where the shop was probably located. According to Wayne Richardson, Newbury Town Lister and father of Lomond Richardson, owner of the property in 2005, the back part and attic show signs of a fire. It is located at 4286 Rte. 5 North, near the intersection of Oxbow Road and a few hundred yards south of the stone marking the location of the Old Court House.

38. Wells, *History of Newbury*, 243. This issue is presently unlocated. Harvard University has May 19 (vol. 1, no. 2), June 30, 1796, and May 22, June 5, July 3, Sept. 4, 1797 (vol. 2, no. 18).

a 'great variety of plays,' and an assortment of children's books, many his father's titles such as *Nurse Truelove's New Year's Gift* and *Little Goody Two Shoes*. These books were available for borrowing for seven pence per week.

Across the Connecticut River, Nathaniel Coverly, Sr., was also printing a newspaper, the *Grafton Minerva*, and designing and printing books, some with his son and others on his own.³⁹ He must have been optimistic about their prospects as he also advertised for two journeymen and apprentice printers in several early issues of the newspaper.⁴⁰ The type and press he was using were apparently brought from Amherst, as the type is worn and his work looks rather ragged. His book titles are few but they are not insignificant and certainly would have added to the workload of a weekly newspaper.

Unfortunately, all was not well with the Coverly businesses. Vermont's Orange County seat had moved to Chelsea in 1796, taking the court and ancillary businesses with it. Nathaniel, Jr., had not paid his school tax of two shillings, which was overdue on March 17, 1797.⁴¹ In the September term of the Grafton County courts, an attachment was filed on the 'Goods or Estate' of Nathaniel Coverly of Newbury, 'to the value of eighty Dollars; and for want thereof to take the body of the said Coverly (if he may be found in your precinct) . . . to answer unto John Montgomery of Haverhill' for several notes. One was dated July 12, 1797, for \$29.06 plus interest, the other for \$7.85. Montgomery's demand of \$80.00, more than twice the debt, was presumably to cover court and legal charges.⁴² Coverly, Jr., had also signed another bill

39. Established March 3, 1796, fifteen issues of the *Grafton Minerva* survive. Scattered issues dated from March 24, 1796 (vol. 1, no. 4) to January 23, 1797 (vol. 1, no. 46) are at Harvard University and the Library Company of Philadelphia.

40. *Grafton Minerva*, May 19 and June 16, 1796.

41. Johnson Papers, 1, 14-15.

42. Grafton County Court Records, March Term 1800, Box 10483, Loc. B07-03, Folder 39, Docket 111. New Hampshire State Archives. John Montgomery (1730-1825) was one of the pioneer merchants in Haverhill and a partner with colonels Thomas Johnson and William Wallace in a proprietorship that built a bridge over the Connecticut River at the 'extreme point of the little Ox-bow' in 1795.

from Montgomery for two trips carrying 'freight of sundry goods from Boston to my store in Haverhill,' one on August 28, 1797, the other January 31, 1798.⁴³ A note on the back of the court writ dated August 13, 1798, indicates that the sheriff 'attached a Chest or box shewn me by the Pl[aintif]f as the Property of the within named Coverly & at the same time gave him summons as the Law directs.'

By March 1800, Coverly was living in Salem, Massachusetts, and running a printing office there. A debt remained uncollected in New Hampshire, and Coverly filed suit in Plymouth to collect a debt of \$27.50 incurred by Jesse Johnson on February 8, 1798. (Earlier, he had requested that Johnson pay Mr. Simson Atkinson on his behalf.) On the back of the note, Coverly shows that Johnson paid him for seven yards of 'chinz' and for 'Horsekeeping' but still owed \$22.28. In the suit, Coverly demanded \$50.00, which was wise, as the court charges ran to \$11.48.⁴⁴

Meanwhile Coverly was trying to sell his business in Newbury. The advertisement describing it in the *Salem Gazette* ran six times in September 1798.

Printers Attend.

To be Sold, cheap,

The whole apparatus of a Printing Office, together with a commodious Building, 28 feet long and 20 wide, situated in the town of Newbury Vermont (an excellent place for publishing a newspaper.) Any person wishing to purchase the same may depend on having a good bargain, and a liberal credit given, if requested, by applying to Nath'l Coverly, Jun. Salem, Sept. 11, 1798.⁴⁵

43. Grafton County Court Records, New Hampshire State Archives. Montgomery charged him £1/6/3 for one trip, and £1/0/11 for the second. Coverly paid 19s./2d. on that bill, leaving a balance of £1/28/0. His term, 'my store in Haverhill,' suggests that in January 1798, his father had already headed south and that he was trying to keep both locations open.

44. The suit was filed on July 18, 1799. Grafton County Court Records, September Term, 1798. Box 1110019, Loc. B08-01, Folder 39, Docket 216. New Hampshire State Archives.

45. *Salem Gazette*, September 11, 18, 21, 25, 28, and October 1, 1798.

The fate of the building and the type and fixtures left in Newbury are discussed some four years later in two letters to his creditors, colonels Thomas Johnson and William Wallace, both leading men of Newbury. The owners of a printing firm in nearby Peacham, Vermont, wrote to Johnson about the possibility of acquiring Coverly's type and decorative flowers ('figures') for use in a job they were working on.

Feb. 9th 1801.

Col. Johnson, Sir

Please inform us per post whether you have the types which Coverly used while at Newbury. Whether there are many *figures*—and whether, in case of imergency, we can be accommodated with them. The Direct Tax advertisements require more than we have on hand. Your compliance will greatly oblige your obt hbl servants

Farley & Goss

P.S. We wish also to know the size⁴⁶

Coverly finally found a buyer, and his letter to Johnson written from Salem on June 10, 1801, describes his difficulties.

I must inform you that on Monday last, I set out with a Waggon load of Books in order to Raise the money to Settle with you and Col Wallace. I got to Pelham [New Hampshire] and my Horses gave out, and I was obliged to return back—which is a great damage to me, if my Building and Types are not sold—I Beg you would put it off a Short time and write me word, and I will come and Settle it immediately. I have engaged the Building to Mr. Larkin⁴⁷ of Boston for Fifty Pounds,—and as I know it will be sacrificed if sold at auction—hope you will wait until []. Let me know—for I will Come up within a week after, and pay the money,—if the Building and things are Sold—Please to write me now what they Sold for, and whether there is a Ballance Still due, and if there is, dont make any more Costs, but get Col Wallace to write me when he is in Boston and I will Settle with him—as I have been very unfortunate,

46. Farley & Goss to Thomas Johnson. Johnson Papers, 1:64.

47. Possibly, Ebenezer, Joseph, or Samuel Larkin, who were booksellers in Boston at this time. (Silver, *The Boston Book Trade, 1800-1825* [New York: New York Public Library, 1949], 33.)

in not being able to come up, your Compliance with my Request
will much oblige your Humble Servant

Nathaniel Coverly Jr.
To Col Thomas Johnson⁴⁸

Wells outlined the end of Coverly's business in Newbury. '[The *Orange Nightingale*] was short-lived for want of funds and patronage. . . . The type and fixtures were sold to Farley & Goss of Peacham, where they were used in the publication of a paper called the "Green Mountain Patriot." This paper came to grief in its turn and the materials of the office were taken to Danville and used in starting the "North Star," in 1804.'⁴⁹

The Coverlys Return to Massachusetts

If Nathaniel, Jr., was served a summons in Haverhill on August 13, 1798, he must have been ready to follow his father out of town. The intention of Nathaniel, Jr., to marry a woman from Salem, Massachusetts, was published January 9, 1798, giving his home as Newbury.⁵⁰ There is no trace of their marriage or her death, and on February 10, 1800, Coverly married Eunice Johnson (1774-1863), of Andover, Massachusetts, a daughter of Peter and Eunice Blanchard Johnson. The pair was married by the Reverend Thomas Baldwin in the Second Baptist Church on Back Street in Boston, perhaps near the place where Coverly's father and mother were then living.⁵¹

From Haverhill, Nathaniel, Sr., had moved to Medford, Massachusetts, a town located about five miles northwest of Boston, and commenced the printing business in a shop 'near the bridge.' Between 1798 and 1800, he issued several titles from his press there, including two editions of *The History of Capt. Thomas Parismas*.

48. Johnson Papers, 1: 65.

49. Wells, *History of Newbury*, 243.

50. Sarah (or Sally) Bickford (bp. 1766) was the granddaughter of Deacon Jonathan Bickford, daughter of his son, Jonathan, and Sarah King Bickford. *Vital Records of Salem, Massachusetts to the End of the Year 1849*, 6 vols. (Salem, Mass.: Essex Institute, 1916-25).

51. *Marriage Records, Second Baptist Church, Boston*. New England Historical Genealogical Society.

In fall 1798 Nathaniel, Jr., apparently moved first to Medford where he issued an edition of the *American Primer Improved*⁵² from his father's printing office and then to Salem, Massachusetts, where he opened a bookshop and press of his own on Essex Street, 'at the sign of Faust's Head.'⁵³ He is listed in the Salem Tax Valuation Books from 1799 to 1802 in Ward 3. He had stock valued at \$200 (1799) and \$300 (1800-1802) and income listed as \$200. In addition to printing, Coverly maintained a 'Circulating Library' of more than 110 titles that he loaned at six cents a week. He also stocked a bookshop in which he kept

constantly for sale, Bibles, Testaments, Watts's Psalms and Hymns, Tate and Brady's ditto, Barnham's ditto, Allens ditto, Spelling Books of different kinds, American Preceptors, Columbian Orators, Ladies Accidence, Childs Companion, Childs Library, Primers, Singing Books, Memorandum books, Writing Paper, Wafers, Slates, Led and Slate Pencils, Dutch Quills, Writing Books, Cyphering Books, Children's Picture books, of various kinds, Pocket Books, Playing Cards, &c. &c. All of which will be sold on reasonable terms.⁵⁴

To amplify his income, Coverly functioned as a ticket agent for the local theater at Washington Hall.⁵⁵

John Coverly joined his brother's business in Salem and during that brief association they issued three almanacs and *Remarkable History of Tom Jones* together.⁵⁶ The title page of the two editions of *Weatherwise's . . . Almanack for . . . 1799* suggests that the father

52. *American Primer Improved* (Medford: Nathaniel Coverly, Jr., 1798).

53. Many printers traded under the name of Faust, the man who participated in the invention of printing from and casting of metal types in Mentz, Germany, in the 1440s. Isaiah Thomas's shop in Boston carried the same name for a time and in 1805 a mutual support society was formed in Boston as 'The Faustus Society.'

54. *Salem Impartial Register*, January 29, 1801. I thank Tom Knoles for bringing this advertisement to my attention.

55. *Salem Gazette*, June 25, 1799.

56. Their partnership was dissolved on June 1, 1799 (*Salem Gazette*, June 4, 1799). John did not accompany his parents when they moved to Amherst, New Hampshire, and may not have made the trip to Haverhill either. A letter addressed to him was reported in the New Haven post office in 1808 (*Connecticut Journal*, January 7, 1808, 3), and genealogical sources trace him to Pennsylvania where he married and settled in Harrisburg.

and his sons may have been printing for one another as they had done in Haverhill. The title page of the edition printed in Medford (Evans 34969) by Nathaniel, Sr., varies only in the imprint lines from the edition released by Nathaniel & John Coverly in Salem (Evans 34970). It looks as if the form was opened, so that a few additional decorative pieces could be removed in the frame, the rules and the cut moved up, and the imprint text for the Salem edition changed. The upper parts appear to be the same for the rest of the pages of the book. Nathaniel, Jr., issued a number of substantial titles on his own in Salem and possibly some under his father's imprint.⁵⁷ The selection, a mix of annual ephemera, religious and travel titles, and children's books, seems to have been broad enough to form a good business. It was here in Salem that Coverly began to publish broadsides with popular lyrics on them, a format to which he would return ten years later. But success was not to be his in Salem. Some time in 1802 he fled the town, leaving his taxes unpaid.⁵⁸ His father had left Medford two years earlier.⁵⁹

Back to Boston—And Bankruptcy

Nathaniel Coverly, Sr., managed to produce three publications in Boston in 1803: Paine's *American Crisis*; an almanac; and a pamphlet on the tribulations of a Freemason. Printing could not have been their highest priority, as both father and son had been declared bankrupts under the Bankruptcy Act of 1800.

On November 10, 1802, a commission against Nathaniel, Sr., was lodged on behalf of his brother, Samuel.⁶⁰ His only estate was

57. Nathaniel, Sr., may have been the 'publisher' (i.e., paid for the printing) of the titles without 'Junior' in the imprint but he apparently never lived in Salem. Nathaniel, Jr., and his wife were listed in Salem in the 1800 census. Nathaniel, Sr., was not included in the 1800 census, perhaps because he was 'in transit' to Boston (see note 58 below).

58. Salem Tax Valuation Books, 1802. Coverly is listed as 'gone.'

59. In an affidavit of support for Nathaniel, Sr., in the bankruptcy proceedings in 1803, fellow printer John M. Dunham declared that he had 'since the first day of June . . . [1800] been in the constant practice of buying and selling stationery & other goods [in Boston] . . . to get a living thereby as traders usually do' (item 10).

60. Samuel Coverly (1753-1845) and James Morrile accepted the cost of the suit. Morrile was James Morrill, the merchant at 21 Cornhill for whom Coverly had printed a trade card in 1786. Samuel was Nathaniel's younger brother. He was married in 1787 to Sarah

'sundry household furniture' including a lot of 'old pamphlets' that were sold at auction in January 1803 for \$37.67, his 'printing types & press' that were sold in August for \$45.94, and a note for \$15 from Charles Cambridge who was still in Amherst, New Hampshire.⁶¹ Under the new federal act of bankruptcy, Coverly was discharged of all his debts on December 29, 1803. The process took about a year.⁶²

Nathaniel, Jr., had a harder time of it. Trouble began back in Salem in July 1799, when he was forced to pawn 'the whole of [his] printing apparatus consisting of a press, types and utensils, &c, being now in my Office in said Salem' for \$145.25 plus interest.⁶³ He may have lost his press soon after as he purchased 'printing apparatus &c.' from Isaiah Parker of Harvard, Massachusetts, in April and May 1800.⁶⁴ Undaunted, Coverly advertised his Circulating Library for several weeks in the *Salem Impartial Register* in early 1801, offering an extensive collection of more than one hundred forty imported and domestic titles similar to the list he had in stock in Newbury.⁶⁵ He issued the *Essex Junto* in July 1802

Winslow (1755-1804). A very successful merchant, he traded in a 'general assortment of English and India goods' at 10 Cornhill. His advertisement in the *Columbian Centinel* for May 22, 1793, supplement, lists a 'good assortment of European Goods' from fancy fabrics to German flutes and bassoon reeds. In 1779, as a young gentleman of twenty-six, he was listed among the subscribers to Chesterfield's *Letters* (www.ancestry.com, accessed February 23, 2005). He was a loyal family supporter, helping his brother with his bankruptcy proceedings and taking Nathaniel's two youngest sons, Edward and Wells, into his business in 1807. In 1809 he turned the Cornhill store over to them and in 1839 his will named Edward to manage his estate until his own ne'er-do-well son, Samuel, Jr., discharged his own debts, 'and not before.' (Suffolk County Probate Papers, 34386, June 23, 1845; will created February 11, 1839.)

61. United States District Court, Massachusetts (cited hereafter as USDC-Mass.), Bankruptcy Case Files, April 18, 1801, Box 12, Nathaniel Coverly. Curiously, Cambridge and his family had been warned out of Amherst in the same document that expelled the Coverly family, but had managed to remain in town.

62. The court costs were \$130.04, \$34.49 more than the assets were sold for. Samuel Coverly paid the balance due the court. USDC-Mass., Nathaniel Coverly, items 21 and 22. It was apparently left up to him to settle with Cambridge.

63. Essex County, Registry of Deeds, Grantor 1649-1799, vol. 166:34. Nathaniel Coverly to Benjamin Wade, July 8, 1799.

64. USDC-Mass., Nathaniel Coverly, Jr., item 21. He gave Parker a note for this and other purchases totaling \$849.76.

65. January 29, February 19, 23, and 26, 1801. The terms were six cents a week or two dollars per quarter.

to a respectable list of subscribers and printed Flavel's *Token for Mourners* and several smaller works in 1801 and 1802.⁶⁶ He also released several works printed on his father's behalf.

On December 18, 1802, five weeks after his father was served with the bankruptcy papers, the sheriff came to the house where Nathaniel was living in Charlestown. The major creditor was Peter Johnson, Nathaniel's brother-in-law.⁶⁷ Again, John M. Dunham testified that he had known 'said Nath'l four years' and that he had been 'in the habit of purchasing & selling merchandise of almost every kind, kept a store in Salem aforesaid for those purposes thought to get a living thereby as traders usually do.'⁶⁸ After some delays, when the court was finally able to take possession of his effects on January 29, 1803, the only items they received were '74 pamphlets, 300 songs & one account book.' He and Eunice were allowed to keep their 'necessary wearing apparel' and their beds and bedding.⁶⁹ When the case was finally settled on March 10, 1804, the court charges exceeded the value of the goods seized and Johnson had to pay the balance.⁷⁰

66. *Salem Impartial Register*; July 12, 1802. Thanks to Tom Knoles for bringing this advertisement to my attention.

67. USDC-Mass., Nathaniel Coverly, Jr., item 1. According to Harriet Silvester Tapley, Dr. Bentley noticed Coverly's plight, writing on December 13, 1802 [!] that 'Mr. Nathaniel Coverly absconded to Charlestown and declared a bankrupt by his brother-in-law, Peter Johnson of Marblehead.' (*Salem Imprints, 1768-1825* [Salem: Essex Institute, 1927], 197-98.) This information does not appear in Bentley's diary or papers at the American Antiquarian Society. I am grateful to Tom Knoles for his help trying to locate the original of this statement. Peter Johnson was single at the time. He married Priscilla [Procter?] in 1803. Eunice's father, also Peter Johnson, died November 3, 1798, in Andover.

68. USDC-Mass., Nathaniel Coverly, Jr., item 7. December 18, 1802.

69. USDC-Mass., Nathaniel Coverly, Jr., item 16. January 29, 1803. Unfortunately, the account book was not retained by the court and is now unlocated. A parcel of real estate was also listed in the settlement. (USDC-Mass., Nathaniel Coverly, Jr., item 19.) The court advertised that Coverly's fifty-acre lot 'lying in Springfield, in the county of Cheshire . . . with the buildings thereon' would be auctioned on February 23, 1804 (*Farmer's Cabinet*, February 14, 1804). Springfield lies in central New Hampshire, about halfway between Amherst and Haverhill. It is not clear how or why Coverly acquired this property. It was sold for \$31.00 which was exactly the lawyer's fees for selling it. (USDC-Mass., Nathaniel Coverly, Jr., item 22.)

70. This judgment apparently also erased a number of other small debts that had been entered in the Essex County Courts between March 25, 1801, and March 16, 1803. See Vol. 18, p. 203, no. 144; p. 439, no. 567; vol. 19, pp. 169-70, no. 970; and p. 207, nos. 1074 and 1075. The total of these suits was \$247.18 plus \$48.70 in court charges. Although the

In each of these procedures the same scenario was followed. In Nathaniel, Jr.'s, case, the deputy sheriff reported that he 'went to the house of Mrs. Johnson in Charlestown, the mother in law of Nathaniel. Found the door fastened, saw Nathaniel thru' the window, demanded security, Nathaniel refused to give security or offer himself to be arrested.'⁷¹ When the deputy sheriff went to arrest Nathaniel, Sr., he found the doors and windows fastened. When the sheriff demanded entrance, he 'was answered by sd Nathaniel from a chamber window that he would not permit himself to be arrested & that he could not give any security to satisfy the said demand.'⁷²

The Bankruptcy Act of 1800 grew out of the economic instability that followed the American Revolution as the currency that supported the war effort depreciated to near worthlessness and debts mounted, particularly among the powerful elite. The country functioned entirely as a credit economy and now the means to pay had lost its value. Various schemes were discussed at the national and state levels. Speculation in currency and other assets added to the problem and business failures were more and more frequent. The bill that was signed into law on April 4, 1800, after months of political wrangling, was a compromise, with limitations on the 'acts of bankruptcy' that would trigger proceedings and a jury process if the debtor demanded it.⁷³

The new law allowed an individual who owed at least one thousand dollars to 'commit an act of bankruptcy' when faced with debts beyond his ability to pay. It created, 'in practice if not in law, a voluntary bankruptcy system,' one in which a debtor could cooperate with his creditors and 'secure a discharge that would enable [him] to start afresh in the economy.'⁷⁴ Bruce H. Mann

Bankruptcy Law was repealed in December 1803, this case seems to have been concluded under its rule in 1804 (Bruce H. Mann, *Republic of Debtors, Bankruptcy in the Age of American Independence* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002], 248).

71. USDC-Mass., Nathaniel Coverly, Jr., item 8.

72. USDC-Mass., Nathaniel Coverly, Jr., item 12.

73. Mann, *Republic of Debtors*, 218.

74. Mann, *Republic of Debtors*, 228.

discusses this law and its consequences, particularly in Massachusetts, suggesting that many bankruptcies 'present patterns of cooperation,' particularly when the petitioning creditor was a close relative of the debtor.⁷⁵ He describes several cases in which small traders were inundated with small debts and credits, some from failed litigation but most for 'labor, supplies, and loans.' Looking back over the past six years for the Coverlys, it is likely that there were scores of small debts and credits on their books that they had little hope of settling, just the sort of thing that the new law could help with.

Mann states that 'fully one-eighth of the petitions' under the new law in Massachusetts were filed by close relatives of the debtor.⁷⁶ The bankruptcy proceedings against both Coverlys fit this description. Each had followed the script of committing an 'act of bankruptcy' by refusing to cooperate with the sheriff; each owed a little over a thousand dollars to an immediate family member in recently signed instruments which may or may not have reflected actual obligations; and while a few outside debts were listed, neither process was challenged in court by additional creditors.⁷⁷ Both emerged from the proceedings without social stigma and Nathaniel, Jr., was young enough to start afresh in his trade. This time he made a success of it.

A Fresh Start for Father and Son

The Suffolk County tax records show that both Coverlys returned to Boston after the bankruptcies. At first, they kept a very low profile. Nathaniel, Sr., is listed in the records first.

75. Mann, *Republic of Debtors*, 231.

76. Mann, *Republic of Debtors*, 232. Even the 'Schedule of Household Furniture' of Coverly, Sr., suggests a friendly court. Most of the thirty-one objects are listed as broken or old, including '8 Old Leather bottom'd Chairs, 6 Old Windsor Chairs, 1 Brooken looking Glass . . . 7 old Silver Tea Spoons . . . 1 Sett Old Liverpool Tea ware & Old Japand waiter . . . 5 Muggs & pitchers all cracked & broke.' The total was \$37.67.

77. In addition to notes of obligation for \$1,177.32 to his brother Samuel dated three days before the bankruptcy case was filed, Coverly, Sr., had signed a note for \$50 to the firm of Thomas and Andrews. USDC-Mass., Nathaniel Coverly, item 9a.

1803	Ward 10, Franklin Street, printer, personal estate \$150 (tax records)
1804	Ward 10, printer, personal estate \$0 (tax records)
1805	Printer, Federal Court (directory)
1806	Printer, 6 Orange Street (directory)
1807	Printer, 52 Orange Street (directory)
1808	Ward 12, Orange Street, grocer, personal estate \$30 (tax records)
1809	Ward 12, printer, 52 Orange Street (tax records)
1810	Lendell Lane, printer (directory) Ward 8, grocery, Kilby Street, personal estate \$200 (tax records)
1813-1816	Printer, High Street (directory)

The first notice that Nathaniel Coverly, Jr., was in business in Boston is the entry in the city directory for 1805, at 55 Hanover Street. In 1806 he was listed as a printer living on Russell Street. For the next three years, he was not listed anywhere, perhaps because he was living with another member of the family.

In this period he may have begun printing again, this time in partnership with Joseph White (c.1755-1836), a former colleague of his father.⁷⁸ Professionally listing himself as 'J. White,' his shop was on Prince Street, just before the bridge to Charlestown. Looking at the Coverly and White careers and focusing on the period between 1803 and 1809 when no imprints appeared from either man, evidence suggests that they were working together.⁷⁹ That evidence consists of nearly fifty broadsides that are among the collection made in Coverly's shop for Isaiah Thomas in 1814. These were printed with White's type and use

78. Joseph White was formerly a partner of Charles Cambridge, who had left the partnership in 1793. White should not be confused with another Joseph White active in Boston at this same time. Chiefly a bookseller, that J. White often ordered imprints together with Thomas & Andrews, J. Boyle, E. Larkin, the Blakes, J. West, and Manning and Loring.

79. It has to be remembered as well that a printing shop could not function with only one person. A minimum of two persons was needed to work the press.

characteristic typesetting techniques as well as flowers and cuts found in White's signed imprints.⁸⁰

In 1802 White was so poor that his taxes were abated, but he owned a press. Certainly it was not a coincidence that by 1810 he had personal property worth \$200 and could pay his taxes. From 1802 to 1804, while Coverly's bankruptcy was in progress, it was impossible for him to produce imprints to sell without risk although the '300 songs' taken by the court suggests that he had begun to print broadsides for the street market. Once he was clear of the court, he had no resources left to purchase paper, ink, or other supplies, much less a press. In 1804 Coverly was stripped of everything. By 1810 he was again able to lease a shop, buy a press and type, and get started in business again.

White and Coverly probably worked together during the pre-1810 period printing and selling broadsides that gave no trace of their origins. One of their first joint works may have been the tiny, anonymous *Mother Goose's Melody, or, Sonnets for the Cradle* in 1804. Without an imprint but unmistakably from White's press, the woodcuts are common to his signed work and to future work from the press of Nathaniel Coverly, Jr. The two apparently continued to share work and stock thereafter. Even after 1810 when Coverly had purchased a new press and modern type and White had moved to Charlestown, broadsides printed from White's type appeared in the Milk Street stock.⁸¹ In 1814 White produced editions of a small pamphlet entitled *The Rich Gentleman who Swallowed a Cobler* for himself and for Coverly. In 1815 his *Naval Songster* included three Coverly cuts. When White disclosed his meager personal estate in his Revolutionary War pension application in 1819, he still owned an 'old printing press,' 300 pounds

80. For a comparison between White's type and Coverly's type, see figures four and five, pp. 247 and 248.

81. Topics of several broadsides in White's type date from the 1810-14 period. These include *A Bloody Battle* about a conflict in Indiana in 1811 and *The Battle between the Chesapeake and Shannon* (1813). Two broadsides, *Paul Jones's Victory* and *Captain Hull's Victory*, appear to have been printed on the same day. However, the first victory occurred in 1779, the other in 1812.

of 'old types,' and a small group of 'books and ballads.'⁸² A sketch of White's life and a checklist of his publications follow the Coverly list. It too helps to clarify the kind of materials popular with the lowest levels of the reading public in Boston in the early Federal period.

During this time, too, Nathaniel, Sr., listed as a printer until his death on December 3, 1816, was probably more active helping his son get restarted than trying to set up a new business for himself. By 1804, he was sixty years old and he and Susanna still had teenagers at home. Father and son had worked closely together throughout their professional lives and the hand of one undoubtedly helped the other on almost every printing project, regardless of the imprint name or location. More than thirty items bear the imprint of Nathaniel Coverly, Sr., with the Milk Street address.

Milk Street, Boston

In 1810, aged about thirty-five, Nathaniel Coverly, Jr., made his move and began to publish and sell broadsides for the street and peddler market. These he proudly marked with his name and new address, thus: 'Printed and sold by Nathaniel Coverly, Jr., Milk Street, corner of Theatre Alley, Boston.'⁸³ Two broadsides, *Sailor's Journal* and *Tom Starboard*, were given a date, October 1810, perhaps his first in the new location. *The London Apprentice* has just the date 'Nov. 1810' and no other imprint information.⁸⁴ In 1811 Coverly released eleven broadsides with the year, several, such as *Meg of Wapping*, with a specific date on them. On this sheet, his imprint ran vertically between the two columns, using pointing hands to emphasize the text: 'Sold by N. Coverly, Jun. — Theatre-Alley, Milk-street'. At the foot of the page he added: 'Boston,

82. National Archives, M804 Series, reel 2556. Revolutionary War Pensions and Bounty Land Warrants, Mary White, widow.

83. Coverly was not the first printer on Milk Street. John Kneeland and Seth Adams had a printing office on Milk Street from 1765 to 1772.

84. Earlier in the year he had compiled and printed a small collection entitled *Entertaining Stories for Little Children* (Shaw-Shoemaker 20058). The imprint was simply, 'Boston: Printed for and sold by the Book-sellers, 1810.' But the cuts are ones that Coverly would use over and over again for the next fifteen years.

April 9th, 1811.' It is not known why Coverly included these dates, because along with these broadsides came a flood of others, all undated, many with his imprint and many without.

He and Eunice had moved into a small shop on Milk Street where he was noted as a 'printer' by both the tax assessor and the compiler of the city directory. The building was still occupied by Abraham Fitton, a wheelwright, his wife, Sarah, and four dependents.⁸⁵ The two families are listed together in the United States Census for 1810. Fitton owned the building which was described in 1798 as being a two-story house of 320 square feet (perhaps 16 feet by 20 feet) with twelve windows, making a well-lighted interior suitable for a printing office.⁸⁶ The building stood on the southeast corner of DaCosta's Alley, which had recently been renamed Theatre Alley, leading down to the new Federal Street Theatre built in 1794. Life must have been chaotic in that small place.⁸⁷

Unlike Coverly's previous locations, this rental property was several long blocks down Devonshire Street, south of the commercial district of Court and State streets, and five blocks southwest of the wharves. There probably was some foot traffic on Milk Street, but not enough to depend on for selling and operating a lending library. The Old South Church stood on the

85. The tax assessments were usually made in the summer so the Coverlys must have moved in recently. Fitton lived at this address but maintained a shop on Hawley Street. He was a prominent member of the first congregation of St. Patrick's Cathedral, located down Theatre Alley on Franklin Square, designed by Charles Bulfinch and dedicated in 1803. (www.newadvent.org/cathen/02703a.htm, accessed December 18, 2004.)

86. *A Report of the Record Commissioners of the City of Boston* (Boston: Rockwell and Churchill, 1890), 352. The description states that the lot was nine hundred square feet in 1798. However, the land transfer records describe a lot of 520 square feet that was twenty feet wide and twenty-six feet two (or six) inches deep. The property was owned by James Whall and John Ward who sold a share to Ebenezer Withington, on September 5, 1800, who sold to Abraham Fitton on May 3, 1805. Whall ('Wall') sold the remaining share to Abraham Fitton on March 13, 1807. Fitton sold his parts of the property to William H. Sumner on October 8, 1806, and April 8, 1807, and completed the transfer on May 11, 1811 (Suffolk County Land Records). Nathaniel Coverly, Jr., witnessed the final transfer and rented the property from Sumner for the rest of his life.

87. The Fittons soon moved out and around the corner to another building that Abraham Fitton owned. Probably compiled later than the census, the directory for 1810 gives Fitton's new address as Theatre Alley. Fitton also owned a small property on the alley that in 1798 had been the residence of Hannah Emmes Uran, widow of Joseph. He finalized his sale of this property as well as the Milk Street house to Sumner in 1811.



Fig. 3. The architecture of the birthplace of Benjamin Franklin on Milk Street conforms closely to the description of the building that was the printing office and home of Nathaniel Coverly, Jr., from 1810 to 1824. After her husband's death, Eunice Coverly kept the shop open for another six years before retiring to Wayland. Caleb H. Snow, *A Geography of Boston* (Boston: Carter and Hendee, 1830), 77.

corner of Marlborough and the rectory was beside it on Milk Street. Across the street was the house in which Benjamin Franklin was born in 1706. It had three stories and the upper two projected over the street in the old style (Fig. 3). It was not there for long, as it burned down on December 29, 1810, and was quickly replaced.⁸⁸ Most of the remaining buildings on the street were also old, made of wood, and occupied as homes except for a few small shops and Julien's famed restaurant on the corner of Dalton Street.⁸⁹

88. Justin Winsor, ed., *Memorial History of Boston including Suffolk County, Massachusetts, 1630-1880*, 4 vols. (Boston: Osgood, 1881), 2: 269.

89. Using the index in the *Report of the Record Commissioners* and the town directory for 1813 which lists the residents of Milk Street (p. 41) one can identify each house on the street in detail, with the size of the lot and the house and their values in 1798, the building material—brick or wood—the number of windows, number of stories, the resident, and the owner. It is not clear why this data was gathered. Taxes for the year 1799 involved only real estate, notes bearing interest, public securities, and bank stock, plus merchandise, vessels, various farm animals, and income from profession, trade, or employment. See *Tax for the Year 1799. Commonwealth of Massachusetts* (Boston: Printed by Young and Minns, 1799 and succeeding years) at <<http://memory.loc.gov>>, accessed May 16, 2007.

At the docks at the bottom of Milk Street were several boarding houses and down the long alley beside his shop was the new Federal Theatre. Along the street from the Franklin house, Coverly's neighbors included Mrs. Sarah Bowdoin, widow of James, son of Governor Bowdoin, whose three-story brick mansion on the east side of Bishop's Alley had a garden that extended back almost to Franklin Street. Thomas Kilby Jones, a very successful auctioneer, lived in the next house, a large rambling wood building also of three stories, and next to him in a three-story wood building was James Wakefield, a picture and mirror-frame craftsman. Next, at the southwest corner of Theatre Alley was Patrick M'Donald who kept a small shop about the same size as Coverly's. Beyond Coverly was Joseph Shed's three-story house in which he and his brother operated a grocery store. Supreme Court Justice and lawyer Robert Treat Paine (1731-1814) lived in a large brick house beyond Shed's on the corner of Federal Street.

Comparing several directory lists where 'house' and 'shop' are differentiated suggests that many of the residents worked outside the neighborhood. But there were a few artists and people in the book trade nearby. Several bookbinders and engravers and Gilbert Stuart, a 'portrait painter,' are listed in the 1813 directory as living on Devonshire north of Milk Street.

Coverly's decision to establish his home and business in Milk Street would result in the transformation of his business. At mid-century Boston historian Melvin Lord recalled that Coverly dealt 'principally in chapbooks, almanacks and cheaply printed ballads for the vulgar taste' and kept a small shop that was 'well known to all hawkers and pedlars.'⁹⁰

Setting Up an Office and Finding a Market

Nathaniel Coverly, Jr., established his business at the Milk Street shop with a new set of type with a clean modern appearance. But

90. Melvin Lord, 'Boston Booksellers Records, 1640-1860,' 4 vols. Octavo vols. B, 3: 34, AAS.

he had two other sets that were older that may have come from either Samuel Hall or Ezekial Russell's stock. One had a short *s*, the other a long *s* that was recognizably different from the type in J. White's shop. All four type styles can be seen in the Thomas broadside collection.⁹¹

Coverly had come to Boston without a press and type. He may have benefited from the fact that several printers had recently ceased business in Boston, making used equipment available.⁹² Russell had died in 1796. From the evidence of cuts and flowers on broadsides later sold in Coverly's shop, it appears that J. White acquired stock from the Russell estate. Russell had specialized in the kind of ephemeral literature that Coverly and White would find most successful. The estate of Benjamin Edes sold his printing equipment in 1804.⁹³ When Samuel Hall died in 1807, his stock was auctioned off.⁹⁴ Hall's equipment may have been of particular interest to Coverly—certainly losing Hall's competition in

91. For an example of each, see: *Glorious Naval Victory* (fig. 5), new type with short *s*; *The Silver Key* (ITBC 1:6), old type with long *s*; *Rosanna* (ITBC 1:101), old type with short *s*; and *Home Industry* (fig. 4), White's type.

92. The Coverlys set up and moved or sold their printing equipment several times during their careers. Nathaniel, Jr., pawned his 'press, types, and utensils' in Salem in 1799 for \$145.25. Nathaniel Sr.'s, equipment brought \$45.94 when it was sold by the bankruptcy court in Boston in 1802. As a comparison, when Isaiah Thomas took an inventory of his Worcester printing plant in 1796 his old 'English press' was valued at \$50. (A detailed inventory is given in Shipton, *Isaiah Thomas, Printer, Patriot and Philanthropist*, 86–90.) Perhaps this is the press that now stands proudly in the balcony of Antiquarian Hall in Worcester, the press on which Thomas first learned to print. Nathaniel Coverly may have worked at the same press in Zechariah Fowle's shop. It may be this type of small press that both Coverlys used early in their careers.

Several presses are listed in wills of contemporary Boston printers, ranging from two presses from Abijah Adams's office worth \$20 and \$100 in 1815 and two old presses worth \$30 in John Fleet's estate in 1806. In his startup in Philadelphia in 1784, Mathew Carey spent £60 for Robert Bell's 'printing press complete' that he bought at auction. He spent another £26 on types, cases, and other equipment. Within four weeks, Carey produced the first issues of a newspaper. (Rollo G. Silver, 'Abstracts from the Wills and Estates of Boston Printers, 1800–1825,' *Studies in Bibliography: Papers of the Bibliographic Society of the University of Virginia* 7 [1955]: 213, 215.)

So it seems that for less than \$100, a printer might acquire the needed materials to print a newspaper and various publications such as broadsides and small pamphlets. Only five hundred to one thousand pounds of type would be necessary. For this information, I thank Vince Golden, curator of newspapers at AAS and a printer himself.

93. Silver, 'Abstracts,' 215.

94. Silver, *Boston Book Trade*, 31.

the field of children's literature was a boon. When he was in Salem, Hall had printed broadsides similar to those Coverly would sell. In fact, most of those listed at the bottom of his *Love in a Tub* (Evans 49260) would reappear in Coverly's catalogue.

Handsome Harry—Happy Child—Children in the Woods—Faithless Sea-Captain—Sweet William of Plymouth—Oxford Tragedy—William and Margaret—Happy Man and True Gentleman—The Wandering Lady, or Cat-Skin—The Penny Worth of Wit—Father Abbey's Will—Jemmy and Nancy—Teague's Ramble—Happy Ship-Carpenter—Mr. Wigglesworth's Dream, &c. &c. &c.

The next aspect of the printing business was to find saleable materials to print. The scope of the eighteenth-century imprints by both men was very derivative. They chiefly reprinted books, pamphlets, and almanacs copied from other printers and their newspapers ran serialized excerpts from books. But when Nathaniel, Jr., opened his printing office in Milk Street, he concentrated first on broadsides for common readers, some reprinting older texts but many with newly composed lyrics reflecting current events and local news. During his first few years in business, Coverly could afford to print only limited editions of inexpensive ephemeral broadsides with entertaining or topical texts that would sell quickly.⁹⁵ He capitalized on American victories at sea and particularly on Boston's pride, the *Constitution*. Sensational titles, breathless introductions with italics for emphasis, and catchy phrases characterize Coverly's new work.

An overview of Coverly's stock is outlined in a colophon in the back of a pamphlet printed for him in 1811. From the large numbers and variety offered it seems that some of the stock must have been printed before he opened the Milk Street business.

95. Coverly's continual problem obtaining paper to print enough copies of the most popular titles was a result of paper scarcity and his lack of funds to pay for it. A result was the number of different editions of bestsellers such as *The Last Words of Polly Goold*, *Happy Child*, *Children in the Woods*, and *American Taxation*.



HOME INDUSTRY.

The most direct road to National Prosperity.

SAGES conven'd from delegating States,
 Who bear the charge of unborn millions fates,
 From early systems trace their habits take,
 And morals more than climates a difference make,
 Then give to toll a bias, aid his cause
 With all the force and majesty of laws;
 While you preside in useful arts direct,
 Create new fabrics and the old protect:
 Lo! at your word, subdu'd for wondering man,
 What mighty elements advance the plan;
 While fire and air obey the masters' call,
 And water labours in its forceful fall;
 Teach tiny hands with engine's to toil,
 Caus'd falling age o'er early tasks to smile;
 First let the loom each liberal thought engage,
 Its labours growing with the growing age;
 Then true utility with rank dispel,
 Shall make our home-furnish its occupations pride.
 See wool the nation's wealth, its proudest hour,
 Is fill the basis of her wealth and power;
 From her the nation waits their wintry robe,
 Round half this globe, poor, dependant globe,
 Shall we, who foisted her sons in fields of lame,
 In peace add glorious triumph to her name!
 Shall we, who dur'd assert the rights of man,
 Become the vaillant of her wiler plan!

Then, thus'd from lethargy, up! mental increase,
 In every vale, on every hill, the fleece!
 And let the folds with thousands terming, fill,
 With flocks the mountain, vales and echoing hills,
 Ye homeless people, man your young will tend,
 While for their coats superfluous lend
 High, as the storm, with curious pride while bare,
 To the north breeze from the piercing air,
 This fleece shall show its azure from the fly,
 This drink the purple, that the scarlet dye;
 Another where immitig'g hues are given,
 Shall mock the bow with colors dip't in heaven;
 Not guard'd Colchis gave admiring Greece
 So rich a treasure in its golden fleece.
 To toll encourag'd, free from tythe and tax,
 Ye farmers sow your fields with hemp and flax,
 Let these the distaff for the web supply.
 Spin on the spool, or with the shuttle fly,
 But while vile cause retards the public plan!
 Why fail the fabrics patriot zeal began!
 Mark nought but tombs of indolence be found,
 Profrat'ed arts expiring on the ground!
 Shall we of gewgaws gleaming half the globe,

Disgrace our country with a foreign robe?
 Forbid it int'rest, independence, shame,
 And blush that kindles bright at honor's flame!
 Should peace, like forcery, with her spells controul,
 Our innate springs and energies of soul;
 To you Columbian dames, my accents call,
 Oh, save your country from the threatened fall!
 Will ye, black fair, adopt from every zone,
 Fantastic fashions noxious in your own?
 At wintry balls in gauzy garments dress'd,
 Admit the dire destroyer in your breast?
 Oft when nocturnal sports your visage flush,
 As gay and heedless to the balls ye rush,
 While tiptoe spirits buoy each graceful limb,
 See down the dance the lovely fair one swim;
 Her own neat needle work improves her bloom,
 Cloth'd in the labours of Columbia's loom.
 Of savage life "know ye the bitter fruits,"
 'Tis savage indolence the man in-bites,
 From indolence the limbs strength acquire,
 The limbs expand, the bottom feels new fire,
 Unwearied indolence pervades the whole,
 Nor loads more force to body than to soul;
 Hence character is form'd, and hence proceeds
 The enlivening heat that fires to daring deeds:
 Then animation bids the spirit warm,
 Soar in the whirlwind and enjoy the storm,
 But sloth begets ferility of soul,
 Degrades each part, contaminates the whole;
 And talents in torpid veins the thickening blood,
 Like the green mantle on a mass of mud,
 Where convents deal the poor their daily broth,
 See charity herself encourage sloth!
 Though helpless some, more lazy join the troop,
 And healthful beggars swell the shameful group,
 Will heaven benignant on those nations smile
 Where sloth and vice are less disgrace than toil?
 With upates drunk, in indolence reclin'd,
 Unbrac'd their foresworn, and debauch'd their mind,
 Can crowds turn'd cowards, self esteem retain,
 Or long unspoil'd of freedom's gifts remain?
 'Tis by the lofty purpose, desperate deed,
 O! men who dare for liberty to bleed,
 By long endurance, fields with crimson stain'd,
 That independence won, must be maintain'd.
 What Rome once virtuous was, that give us now,
 Statesmen and warriors awful from the plow,
 Then shall Columbia know at length,
 In tell, not surp, conq's our nation's struggle

Fig. 4. Home Industry. This broadside was printed by Joseph White, using a cut from his earlier children's stories. Here the effect of his 'long-bodied' type can be seen clearly. His letters like other non-proportional type do not group visually into words—the eye sees a block of text rather than words and sentences. Courtesy Boston Public Library, Rare Book Department.



GLORIOUS NAVAL VICTORY.

OBTAINED BY COMMODORE BAINBRIDGE, OF THE UNITED STATES FRIGATE CONSTITUTION,
OVER HIS BRITANNIC MAJESTY'S FRIGATE JAVA.

BY JAMES CAMPBELL, A BOATSWAIN'S MATE ON BOARD THE CONSTITUTION.

COME listen to my story the truth I will unfold,
Concerning a frigate, she was man'd with hearts of gold,
We took a cruise from Boston, as you shall understand,
For to maintain the freedom of our own native land.

We took a new Commander, and Bainbridge was his name,
Our lot it was to have him, we could not deny the same,
He proved a Commander that was both firm and true,
You shall find in the story of the Constitution's crew.

On the 27th of October, as you shall understand,
We steered for an Island, it was called Ferdinand;
All for to water ship my boys, and then to sail away,
Unto the Brazil coast, to beat our daring enemy.

On the 20th of December, being early in the day,
A frigate bore down on us, she was called the JAVA;
We took her to be a seventy-four, and from them bore away,
Thinking the English Squadron to the windward of us lay.

At eleven o'clock, we made the signal of the day,
Being not directly answer'd, 'twas then we bore away,
At twelve we made more sail my boys, but from them we did go,
But our desire was to be along side of our most daring foe.

Our ensign and pendant we hoisted to let them understand,
They hoisted their colors, they were those of old England;
With their union jack being hoisted, it was their British pride,
Which they were fere'd to strike to us, or sink along our side.

'Twas one when we perceived she was a single deck ship,
It being our intention their British boxes to rip;
We gave to them three cheers, and thus the fray began,
Each loyal hearted seaman then rerying at his gun.

It was a little after she attempted to rake us,
But we being not inclined to let them serve us thus;
We giving them a broadside, which made them haul their wind,
To meet such a reception, they were not much inclin'd.

It was at two o'clock the bloody fray began,
Each hourly tar and six of ours, was active at his gun,
Untill their fore and main-mast, was fairly shot away,
And with rebated courage, we gave them three broadsides.

Her mainmast it was standing, and to windward of us lay,
And on that stick her union jack, to us they did display,
Her hull was sadly lacerated, and they being badly man'd,
Unto the Constitution, down her main-jack soon she haul'd.

Our Commodore at seeing that she had her colors struck,
He wished to every officer the heaven and host of luck;
Likewise to every seaman that was both firm and true,
Here's to brave Commodore Bainbridge & the Constitution's crew.

Two hours and three quarters, we engaged very hot,
Untill our wounded and four poor Britons, lay dead upon the spot,
Which made them think the Yankees could show them fair play,
And made them strike the union, on the close of that great day.

Come all you royal Englishmen, the truth of you I'll tell,
If you can beat the French, we you can beat as well,
For it shall be recorded, that Americans shall fly,
Great Washington be made us free, and worth still to be free or die.

Come all of our brave citizens, your tribute to us bring,
For this gallant achievement, in this great and glorious thing,
We can beat all our enemies, like lions that is stout,
So come fill the can beave fellows, and let us drink it out.

Here's to our wives & sweethearts, for whom we fought for fame,
And when the happy children shall sing forth their father's name,
And the pretty girls of every stamp, what more then can we do?
So may success attend those heroes of the Constitution's crew.

BOSTON.

PRINTED AND SOLD BY NATHANIEL COVERLY, JUNR.
Corner Theatre-Alley.

Fig. 5. *Glorious Naval Victory*, a broadside from the American Antiquarian Society's Isaiah Thomas Broadside Ballad Collection (ITBC 3:23) is decorated with two crisp and sharp relief cuts—two flowers that Coverly used frequently—and printed with his new, clean type. Courtesy American Antiquarian Society.

Sold by Nathaniel Coverly, corner of Theatre-Alley, Milk-Street, Boston, a great assortment of children's toy-books, pamphlets, ballads, &c.—Where travelling traders, may be supplied by the thousand gross, or single dozen, on the most reasonable terms:—also, spelling books, primers, chap books, &c. For sale as above, by the gross, dozen or single, Ann Moor's pamphlet, price 75 cents per dozen, 12½ single.⁹⁶

By 1812 his business appeared to be stable and he began to reissue small pamphlets such as *The Mother's Gift* with illustrations very different from other printers' versions of the same text. We see an early appearance of these singular cuts in the 1810 *Entertaining Stories for Little Children*. For the grownups, in 1813 his stock included such topical satires as *The First Book of the Washington Benevolents*; otherwise called, *The Book of Knaves* and a sixteen-page collection of song texts called *The Naval Songster, or the Sailor's Pocket Companion*. Both of these were illustrated with new relief cuts.

Coverly had clearly found the right market for what he produced. He was selling his products and had the money to create more. The number of different broadside ballad sheets that he was able to supply to Isaiah Thomas in June 1814 suggests a fully stocked shop even if he did not yet have enough money to invest in decent printing paper of consistent sizes.

'The Female Marine'

Daniel A. Cohen has described the publication that finally put Coverly's business permanently in the black.

By 1815 Coverly was no novice at cashing in on the patriotism of [his] readers In the aftermath of the *Constitution's* triumphant return to Boston, Coverly came up with a formula that would appeal to [all]. In mid-August 1815, Coverly inserted notices in two of Boston's Republican newspapers advertising a pamphlet entitled *An Affecting Narrative of Louisa Baker*. The title page of the

⁹⁶ Ann Moor, *An Account of the Extraordinary Abstinence of Ann Moor* (Boston: B. True, 1811).

first edition indicated that it had been printed in New York by one Luther Wales. However, that imprint was almost certainly a fiction contrived by Coverly, perhaps as a 'cover' in the event that Boston authorities were offended by the racy work. For the narrative was typical of Coverly's output—and his name appeared proudly on three subsequent editions.⁹⁷

It was a tale of a teenage girl who is seduced, finds shelter in a brothel in Boston, disguises herself as a man and serves bravely on board the *Constitution*, returns penitent to her parents, and in later editions, eventually marries a wealthy man. Between 1815 and 1818 there were nineteen printings or editions of the narrative that came to be titled *The Female Marine*. Sensing that he had a good product, Coverly advertised several editions in local newspapers, and his notices were copied by newspaper editors as distant from Boston as Alexandria and Norfolk, Virginia.⁹⁸

While dating most of Coverly's work is difficult, we can determine that some imprints were released after 1816. Sometime after the directory for 1816 was printed, probably in the spring of 1818, numbers for buildings on Milk Street came into general use. The next extant directory, that of 1818 lists Coverly's shop at 16 Milk Street.⁹⁹ It was at this time that Coverly began to have some of his printing done for him. With the conclusion of the war, the broadside market was giving way to pamphlets, mostly of twenty-four pages, many with tabloid titles such as *The Murder's Cave, A Sermon on the Horrid Murder, or Discourse on the Unpardonable Sin*. In 1818, for *Horrid Murder*, he noted that he had secured a copyright for its contents, even though the murder had occurred twelve years earlier.

At the end of his life in the 1820s, Coverly turned back to the kinds of children's literature with which his father had begun his

97. Daniel A. Cohen, "The Female Marine" in an Era of Good Feelings: Cross Dressing and the "Genius" of Nathaniel Coverly, Jr., *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 103 (1994): 363-64.

98. *Alexandria Herald*, October 2, 1815; *American Beacon* (Norfolk, Va.) October 6, 1815.

99. The houses were evidently renumbered after the 1828 directory was published. Eunice's shop is at 40 Milk Street in the directory for 1829.

career. He released small sixteen-page editions such as the *Death and Burial of Cock Robin* and *The Life and Death of Tom Thumb*, all printed by others.

Nathaniel Coverly, Sr., died December 3, 1816, at the age of seventy-two and was buried in the family plot, Tomb 129 in the Granary Burial Ground on Tremont Street in Boston. There he lies with Boston's Revolutionary War patriots, Paul Revere, John Hancock, Samuel Adams, and James Otis.¹⁰⁰ Sadly, the stone marking his grave is now broken off. Nathaniel, Jr., carried on his business until his death on September 14, 1824. He, too, was buried in Tomb 129. His widow, Eunice, continued the 'pamphlet shop' until 1830 when she retired and moved to live in Wayland, Massachusetts, where she died August 6, 1863, at the age of eighty-eight.¹⁰¹ They had no children to continue the business.

This narrative and checklists grew out of an in-depth study of Thomas's broadside collection, one of the earliest and most cherished treasures of the American Antiquarian Society's library. *Songs in Vogue in 1814: The Isaiah Thomas Broadside Ballad Collection at the American Antiquarian Society* will be published in two-volumes with facsimiles of each sheet, material facts, an essay on each lyric or text, and reproductions from the songsters, sheet music, and manuscript tune books that document the music for each lyric on the sheets. The 155 unique relief cuts, which open a new window onto images common between 1800 and 1814, will be gathered into a separate section with cross-references and giving sources where they are known.

100. Robert S. Dunkle and Ann S. Lainhart, comps., *Inscriptions and Records of the Old Cemeteries of Boston* (Boston: New England Historic Genealogical Society, 2000), 466.

101. The census of 1860 lists her as living with Mary Allen (age 82) and Edwin P. Johnson (age 21).

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