

2256 *Improved entry*: [Masonic apron for the Royal Arch chapter.]  
Published by Lewis Roberson, Weathersfield, Vt. [n.d. ca. 1816.] 41 x 54.5cm.

vthi\* ¶ Printed on silk, with an elliptical lower border. Probably engraved by Oliver Tarbell Eddy. Another example of this apron is held by the Museum of Our National Heritage in Lexington, Mass. It is illustrated as item 64 in the museum's catalogue, *Bespangled Printed & Embossed. Decorated Masonic Aprons in America, 1790-1850*, compiled by Barbara Franco and issued in 1980.

2256A FREEMASONS

[Masonic apron.] Published by Lewis Roberson Weathersfield Vermont. O. Eddy, sc. [n.d. ca. 1816.] 41 x 35.5cm.

MWA\* ¶ Engraved by Oliver Tarbell Eddy. Printed on silk in a rectangular shape. Another example of this apron is held by the Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of Massachusetts, Boston. It is illustrated as item 63 in *Bespangled Printed & Embossed*.

A NOTE ON THE PRINTING OF THE NEW ENGLAND

'*Almanacks*,' 1646-1650

A striking, but hitherto unnoticed parallel exists between the practice of printing almanacs 'at Cambridge in New England' from 1646 to 1650 and those produced by the London printing houses during the same period. The parallel lies in the use, to a greater or lesser extent, of standing type for the printing of consecutive issues of a particular almanac. From this parallel and other evidence, we are able to suggest how the knowledge of a typical English printing house practice was transmitted to the earliest American printers.

Composition has always been one of the most expensive factors in the economics of book production. Thus, it is not

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surprising to find that the use of standing type was a common practice for printing English almanacs, one that helped keep the production costs of the lucrative annuals to a minimum, even though the practice had been specifically forbidden by an ordinance of the Stationers' Company in 1635.<sup>1</sup> It is, however, surprising to find that the same practice was followed by the first American printers. There is no external evidence that any American printer had had any printing experience or foreign contacts within the trade either before their establishment at Cambridge in 1639 or during their operation of the printing house there, until the arrival of the journeyman printer Marmaduke Johnson, who was hired to assist Samuel Green with the printing of the Eliot Indian Bible in 1660. Yet, somehow, the practice was known to Matthew Daye (or someone associated with him), who was most probably responsible for printing, from standing type, the New England *Almanacks* for 1646 to 1649. Samuel Green, who assumed the operation of the printing house after Daye's death in May 1649, must also have known of the practice, for, along with the printing house, Green also inherited the standing type that he subsequently used to print the *Almanack* of 1650.

The determination of the extent to which standing type was used in the Cambridge almanacs was made through the use of 'composite imaging,' a computer-based comparative technique that we have recently described.<sup>2</sup> Our studies reveal that, with some minor changes, the Cambridge printers used the entire setting of the title page consecutively from 1647 to 1650<sup>3</sup> (this is especially noticeable in the text between the rules). We have also learned that, on the verso of the title leaf, standing

<sup>1</sup> Edward Arber, ed., *A Transcript of the Registers of the Company of Stationers of London, 1554-1640*, 5 vols. (1877; rpt. New York, 1950), 4:22. The ordinance required, in part, that all standing type used in almanac printing be distributed once a year.

<sup>2</sup> 'Composite Imaging: A New Technique in Bibliographic Research,' *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 77 (1983): 431-45.

<sup>3</sup> The almanacs are known only by a unique example of each; the 1646 issue lacks the first two and final leaves; the 1650 issue lacks the final leaf.

type was used from 1647 to 1649 for the entire lower half of the page, which begins with the heading 'How to know when it is full-sea at Boston'; also, higher on the same page, standing type for the paragraph headed 'The use of the Kalendar' was employed in the 1648 and 1649 issues. Our study of the almanacs also indicates that on each of the twelve calendar pages, the monthly head-title and following lines that give times of sunrise and sunset were printed from standing type from 1646 to 1650; in addition, on the recto of the final leaf, the three lines beginning 'A Chronological table . . .,' were printed from standing type in 1648 and 1649; and finally, except for some other possible, but undemonstrable areas, the remaining text appears to have been reset each year. The extent to which the Cambridge printers used standing type was essentially the same as their English counterparts. The English product, however, shows more of a piecemeal approach,<sup>4</sup> with at least partial resetting (even though no textual changes were made) to most pages, perhaps in an attempt to avoid the censure of the Stationers' Company.

Since Matthew Daye is not known to have had prior printing experience, it must be assumed that either he himself devised this practical (since the use of standing type provided a convenient way to store the otherwise unneeded pre-cut rules and astrological sorts) and economical solution, or that he had seen the practice in England (this would, of course, lend support to the belief that he had been a printer's apprentice before his removal to New England). A third assumption is that he was instructed in the technique by one who was familiar with it. Samuel Green, by his own account,<sup>5</sup> had had no prior printing

<sup>4</sup> Compare, for example, sig. B4<sup>r</sup> of *Booker 1646* (Wing A1336) with *Booker 1647* (Wing A1337), and the title page of *Chamberlaine 1647* with *Chamberlaine 1649*.

<sup>5</sup> In a letter of July 6, 1675, to John Winthrop, Jr., Green wrote: 'it is about printing the employment I was called unto when there was none in the country to carry it along after the death of him that was brought ovr for that work by Mr Jose Glover, and although I was not before used unto it yett being urged thereunto by one and another of place did what by my own endeavours and help that I gott from some others that was procurred, I undertook the work . . . [*sic*].' Quoted in George Parker Winship, *The Cambridge Press, 1638-1692* (Philadelphia, 1945), p. 339.

experience. Thus, Green's use of the same setting of type must have been either fortuitous or the result of intervention by one familiar with the practice. Extant evidence supports only the assumption of outside assistance.

One possible explanation about the origin of the use of standing type in the New England *Almanacks* is that Hezekiah Usher of Boston, who is named as the publisher on the title page of the 1647 issue, may have known of the practice. Usher was a general merchant and bookseller with connections in England, and he may have conferred with his British correspondents on the most economical way to produce an annual almanac. Another, and much more intriguing possibility, relates to two statements made towards the end of the eighteenth century which connect Gregory Dexter with the Cambridge printing house. In 1763, Morgan Edwards wrote, 'About the year 1646 [Dexter] was sent for to Boston, to set in order the printing press there, for which he desired no other reward than that one of their almanacs should be sent him every year.'<sup>6</sup> Isaiah Thomas, citing an undated manuscript of Ezra Stiles (d. 1795) relates, 'It is said that after Samuel Green began printing at Cambridge, Dexter went there, annually, for several years, to assist him in printing an Almanac.'<sup>7</sup> Although unsubstantiated, the veracity of these statements has never been challenged. On the contrary, it has been assumed that they corroborate one another,<sup>8</sup> even though their similarity suggests that they may have derived from a common source.<sup>9</sup> Taken together, these remarks still indicate that Dexter went to the Bay Colony to assist in some aspect of printing-house

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 72.

<sup>7</sup> Isaiah Thomas, *The History of Printing in America*, 2 vols. (Worcester, 1810), 1:419. Thomas also records that Dexter printed, while in London, a 1644 almanac for Providence Plantations, although no copy is known.

<sup>8</sup> Howard M. Chapin, 'Gregory Dexter, Master Printer,' *Rhode Island Historical Society Collections* 12 (1919): 107.

<sup>9</sup> That Edwards and Stiles were acquainted is a virtual certainty. They had mutual interests and both were among the 'Trustees and Fellows' named in the Brown University Charter of 1764.

operations and that almanacs were involved on an annual basis.

Prior to his arrival at Providence Plantations, probably not later than the autumn of 1644, Gregory Dexter had been a printer in London. He was first an apprentice, and from 1641 to 1643, he was a master in partnership with Richard Oulton.<sup>10</sup> Of the approximately 115 titles printed by Oulton and Dexter, Bradford F. Swan has shown that in several instances standing type was used, in part, to print various 'petitions' and 'declarations' that were the mainstay of their trade.<sup>11</sup> What he did not record was that the firm printed at least four almanacs, and that of these the entire lower half of the verso of the title leaf of *Dade 1643* was printed from the type left standing after the printing of *Dade 1642*.<sup>12</sup>

Not only, therefore, did Dexter know of the practice of using standing type (as might be expected of any experienced printer), but he used the technique in an almanac, the example

<sup>10</sup> Dexter was apprenticed in 1632 to Elizabeth Allde whose son, Richard Oulton, succeeded to the Allde house early in 1636. Dexter was made free of the Company in 1639.

<sup>11</sup> Bradford F. Swan, *Gregory Dexter of London and New England, 1610-1700* (Rochester, N.Y., 1949), pp. 24-30.

<sup>12</sup> The four almanacs printed by Oulton and Dexter are *Clifford 1642*, *Dade 1642*, *Dade 1643*, and *Vaux 1643*. Additional proof that the identical setting was used is seen in the last paragraph where, in both issues, an upper case roman 'M' is found in a text otherwise set in black-letter. It is highly unlikely that this wrong font sort would appear in the same location two years in succession if the type had been distributed. Swan also left unrecorded some interesting facts relating to Dexter's career as a printer in London. Among these facts are the following: he was committed to Gatehouse Prison on July 10, 1641, for refusing to answer questions relating to the printing of Wing B6171 (*Journals of the House of Commons*, [1742], 2:205 and 269-70); he was indicted for high treason shortly before January 17, 1642, for printing Wing T431 (Willson H. Coates, Anne Steele Young, and Vernon F. Snow, eds., *The Private Journals of the Long Parliament* [New Haven, 1982], pp. 96 and 103); he was summoned to appear before the House of Commons on March 28, 1642, for printing a 'Humble Petition and Declaration of both Houses of 23 Martii' without license (*Commons*, 2: 501; we are unable further to identify this title); and Abigail Dexter's commitment to King's Bench Prison on October 5, 1642, for refusing to answer questions relating to the printing of Wing J137, which had been ordered burnt (*Journals of the House of Lords*, [1767], 5: 345 and 385-86). Questioned by the Lord Chief Justice, Mrs. Dexter asserted that the book had been printed under her direction in the absence of her husband. This confirms Swan's suggestion, based on the paucity of Oulton and Dexter imprints for October through December 1642, that the partners were away from their printing house during this period. It is curious that Oulton is not mentioned in any of these actions.

of which was followed identically by the printers at Cambridge a few years later, at a time when he was residing fifty miles away in Providence. This evidence lends further support to the traditional accounts of Edwards and Stiles, and we may well agree with Lawrence C. Wroth's comment that 'if Gregory Dexter had a hand in the almanac of 1650 on Green's behalf, he was also concerned in the almanac for 1647 as assistant to Matthew Daye.'<sup>13</sup> Dexter may also have been involved in the production of the preceding and intervening issues. Taken as a whole, the evidence also indicates that both Matthew Daye and Samuel Green could have learned about one of the typical printing-house practices of the time, a practice that continued to be used by Green, as can be seen in the next extant New England *Almanacks* of 1656 and 1657, and in which can still be discerned remnants of the 1650 title-page setting.

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<sup>13</sup> Lawrence C. Wroth, 'The Cambridge Press,' in *Bookman's Holiday* (New York, 1943), p. 515.

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